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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Women empowerment key to addressing climate, health crisis: DENR

March 7, 2021, 5:30 pm



MANILA – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) underscored the need for women's active participation on the policies and programs designed to address challenges emerging from climate change and current and future pandemics during the kickoff ceremony celebration of the National Women's Month.

"Our women, especially those in low-income communities, are among the most affected by climate change and Covid-19 because they have limited resources and information to combat the impacts of these crises," DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information System and Climate Change Analiza Rebuelta-Teh said.

Citing a 2020 report by international climate research organization Project Drawdown, Teh said empowering women and girls in developing countries, like the Philippines, ranked second among 76 solutions for curbing global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.

"Women have the natural capability to adapt to climate change. Educating women and girls will also help raise their resilience from disasters," said Teh, quoting the report, in a news release on Sunday.

She said the DENR plays a very significant role to address the climate change.

"Our programs in the coastal areas, land, cities, forests, mines, and others should be geared to protect and nurture not only our environment and natural resources but also the well-being of our communities, including men and women, from the climate crisis and the current and future pandemics," she added.

In this year's National Women's Month celebration, DENR shines light on the importance of women making change amid the climate crisis and Covid-19.

The month-long event focuses on the equal and active participation of women in issues concerning the environment, particularly climate change, disaster risk reduction, and health crisis.

"For women's month this year, we highlight on expanding and upscaling transformative actions of individuals, women, men, groups and communities, that is why we are taking centerstage a climate and disaster resiliency recognition awards scheme, dubbed as, 'Mga Kwentong KLIMA-likasan Tungo sa Katatagan' (Stories on climate-environment towards stability)," Teh said.

The DENR, through the Gender and Development Office and Climate Change Service (CCS), aims to highlight the stories of individuals, both women and men, and groups on the impacts of climate change in their communities and on how they are addressing them through relevant programs on environmental protection and conservation, climate change and disaster-risk reduction.

The "Mga Kwentong KLIMA-likasan Tungo sa Katatagan: A Climate and Disaster Resiliency Recognition Awards" is in support to the Good Stories Movement led by environmental lawyer Antonio Oposa Jr.

"We share the common belief that we can change the story of the world by changing the storyline. We aim to spot and highlight the good stories, and in doing so, encourage more to pursue good stories of behavior changes in environment, care for the Earth, and addressing impacts of climate change in their communities,"



She urged all the DENR offices at the Central Office, bureaus, attached agencies, regional, provincial, and community offices to help spot the good stories at the ground level.

"These initiatives should have been existing up to now and at least, for the last three years. If such good stories also need assistance in documentation from our local stakeholders, I urge our various offices to extend such assistance," she added.

The DENR will also conduct webinars and radio programs throughout the month in line with this year's theme, "Women can make change amidst the climate crisis and Covid-19."

For the schedules, interested individuals may visit the DENR-CCS social media page at [facebook.com/DENRCCS](https://www.facebook.com/DENRCCS).

The National Women's Month is celebrated every March as "Women's Role in History Month" under Proclamation No. 227, series of 1988.

March 8 of every year has been declared National Women's Day under Republic Act 6949, series of 1990, and Women's Rights and International Peace Day under Proclamation No. 224, series of 1988. (PR)



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Source: <https://maharlika.tv/2021/03/07/women-empowerment-key-to-addressing-climate-health-crisis-denr/?fbclid=IwAR28g3qwviSSjccIqHiZW6ljBOC6PgLgUdvXeILbs8JK39L8HZaf553kMrg>

Women empowerment susi sa pagtugon sa climate, health crisis – DENR



March 7, 2021 @ 4:59 PM 13 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Upang matugunan ang lumalalang problema sa climate change at kasalukuyang pandemya binigyang diin ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang kahalagahan ng aktibong partisipasyon ng kababaihan sa mga polisiya at programa matapos ang isinagawang kick-off ceremony ng National Women’s Month.

“Ang ating mga kababaihan, lalo na ang ating mga kababaihan na nagmumula sa ating mga low-income communities, ay kabilang sa mga pinaka-apektado ng climate change at COVID-19, dahil sila ay mayroong mas kaunting resources at impormasyon na magagamit upang labanan ang epekto ng mga ito,” saad ni DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems and Climate Change Analiza Rebuelta-Teh.

Ayon kay Teh, base sa 2020 report ng international climate research organization Project Drawdown, ang pagpapalakas sa mga kababaihan sa developing countries tulad ng Pilipinas ay pumapangalawa sa 76 solutions para sa “curbing global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.”

“Ang mga kababaihan rin ay may likas na kagalingan sa pag-adapt sa climate change. Ang pagbibigay edukasyon sa ating mga kababaihan at batang babae ay nakakatulong din upang itaas ang kanilang resilience mula sa mga kalamidad,” sabi ni Teh na bumabase sa naturang ulat.

“Our Department plays a very significant role to address this problem. Our programs in the coastal areas, land, cities, forests, mines, and others should be geared to protect and nurture not only our environment and natural resources but also the well-being of our communities, including men and women, from the climate crisis and the current and future pandemics,” dagdag pa nito.

Nabatid sa DENR sa National Women’s Month celebration ngayong taon, binigyang diin nito ang kahalagahan ng kababaihan upang magkaroon ng pagbabago tungkol sa problema sa climate crisis at COVID-19.

Ayon pa sa DENR ang month-long event ay nakatutok sa patas at aktibong partisipasyon ng kababaihan sa mga isyu patungkol sa environment, partikular na ang climate change, disaster risk reduction at health crisis.

“For women’s month this year, we highlight on expanding and upscaling transformative actions of individuals, women, men, groups and communities, that is why we are taking centerstage a climate and disaster resiliency recognition awards scheme, dubbed as, ‘Mga Kwentong KLIMA-likasan Tungo sa Katatagan’ (Stories on climate-environment towards stability),” dagdag pa ni Teh.



Layunin ng DENR sa pamamagitan ng Gender and Development Office and Climate Change Service (CCS) na mabigyan ng halaga ang kuwento ng mga indibidwal at grupo kung ano ang epekto ng climate change sa kanilang komunidad at paano nila ito nilalabanan sa pamamagitan ng mga programa sa environmental protection and conservation, climate change at disaster risk reduction.

Ang “Mga Kwentong KLIMA-likasan Tungo sa Katatagan: A Climate and Disaster Resiliency Recognition Awards ay sumusuporta sa Good Stories Movement na pinangungunahan ni environment lawyer Antonio Oposa, Jr.

Ang selebrasyon ng National Women’s Month na ginagawa tuwing Marso ay nagsisilbing “Women’s Role in History Month sa ilalim ng Proclamation No. 227 s. 1988.

Ang Marso 8 tuwing taon ay idineklarang National Women’s Day sa pamamagitan ng Republic

Act 6949, Series of 1990 at Women’s Rights and International Peace Day sa ilalim naman ng Proclamation No. 224, Series of 1988. **Santi Celario**



KABABAIHAN MAY LIKAS NA KAGALINGAN SA PAGTUGON SA CLIMATE, HEALTH CRISIS – DENR



March 7, 2021 @ 5:58 PM 12 hours ago

BINIGYANG-diin ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang kahalagahan ng aktibong partisipasyon ng kababaihan sa mga polisiya at programa upang matugunan ang lumalalang problema sa climate change at kasalukuyang pandemya sa isinagawang kick-off ceremony ng National Women’s Month.

“Ang ating mga kababaihan, lalo na ang ating mga kababaihan na nagmumula sa ating mga low-income communities, ay kabilang sa mga pinakaapektado ng climate change at COVID-19, dahil sila ay mayroong mas kaunting resources at impormasyon na magagamit upang labanan ang epekto ng mga ito,” saad ni DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems and Climate Change Analiza Rebueta-Teh.

Ayon kay Teh, base sa 2020 report ng international climate research organization Project Drawdown, ang pagpapalakas sa mga kababaihan sa developing countries tulad ng Pilipinas ay pumapangalawa sa 76 solutions para sa “curbing global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.”

“Ang mga kababaihan din ay may likas na kagalingan sa pag-adapt sa climate change. Ang pagbibigay edukasyon sa ating mga kababaihan at batang babae ay nakatutulong din upang itaas ang kanilang resilience mula sa mga kalamidad,” sabi ni Teh na bumabase sa naturang ulat.

“Our Department plays a very significant role to address this problem. Our programs in the coastal areas, land, cities, forests, mines, and others should be geared to protect and nurture not only our environment and natural resources but also the well-being of our communities, including men and women, from the climate crisis and the current and future pandemics,” dagdag pa nito.

Sa National Women’s Month celebration ngayong taon, binigyang-diin ng DENR ang kahalagahan ng kababaihan upang magkaroon ng pagbabago tungkol sa problema sa climate crisis at COVID-19.

Ang month-long event ay nakatutok sa patas at aktibong partisipasyon ng kababaihan sa mga isyu patungkol sa environment, partikular na ang climate change, disaster risk reduction at health crisis.

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The Vanishing Wildlife in the Philippines

BY [VILLAGE CONNECT](#) ON MARCH 6, 2021 [NEWS](#)

The Vanishing Wildlife in the Philippines



World Wildlife Day last March 3 passed without much visibility and celebration —not like the celebrations accorded World Earth Day and other events.

Habitat loss, poaching, pollution, among many others, are the reasons that many species are endangered and have gone extinct, thanks to human greed.

Some of the wildlife are predators and prey but the biggest destroyer of wildlife is humanity.

Recent years have shown uncontrolled, but allowed (by virtue of friendship), extraction by Chinese vessels of fishery products and other wildlife species in Philippine waters. Many of them are endemic.

The wanton neglect and least attention given to wildlife is because men are not aware of what wildlife extinction would do to them until it is too late.

As Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the “complexities in life have pushed environmental protection in the back of our minds, the effects are not necessarily felt now but would be devastating in the future.”

Cimatu warned that “our forests are fragile resources and that to maintain its integrity, we have to take a step forward by collaborating with enforcement agencies and adapting models in managing our ecosystems. We need to establish efficient investigation and prosecution of wildlife cases with a renewed vigor and determination that we will see our goals come into fruition.”

Just now, we are beginning to feel the effects of wildlife decimation. The life cycle has been altered considerably to the point that sooner than later, more epidemics and catastrophes will occur because of abuse and wanton misuse of our resources, particularly the wildlife.

Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, who addressed the World Wildlife Day celebration last March 3 virtually, reminded everyone that we share this planet with our precious wildlife. We lose these resources due to the wanton destruction of their forest habitats and the rising demand for illegally traded wildlife. He emphatically expressed that it is about creating a future that takes every living creature into account.”

Senator Cynthia Villar, whose family’s real estate business had many contributions to the conversion of lands and the subsequent loss of biodiversity, also joined the celebration online underscoring the “importance of taking action on the protection of our biological diversity because any damage or loss will cost too much for a country such as ours. There is so much at stake and we become vulnerable to the adverse side effects if we do not commit to taking care of our environment.” She butted for even stronger enforcement of environmental protection laws



5 ENDANGERED SPECIES



Sun Star News compiled a list of 5 endangered species in the Philippines. These are: the tamaraw; the Philippine crocodile; Philippine Mouse Deer; tarsier and the Philippine forest turtle.

The tamaraw is a dwarf buffalo that lives in only one place in the world—Mindoro Island, Philippines. It is classified as critically endangered. They have shiny black hair, backward-facing horns, and stand at no taller than about 4 feet at the shoulders. Despite being tiny, they are known for having quite a temper and will ready their horns against any strangers. More than 10,000 Tamaraw once lived across the island of Mindoro, but hunting, habitat degradation and disease over the years have sent the population spiraling downward, with only about 480 left today.



The Philippine crocodile is said to have a diet of mostly fish, small mammals, birds and snails. They help farmers in controlling those pests on the rice fields. Compared to other crocodiles, the Philippine crocodile is an average of 5 feet long. The Philippine crocodile is a critically endangered species and considered to be the most threatened crocodile species in the world. This endemic freshwater crocodile, once thought to be extinct in Luzon, was recently rediscovered in the Northern Sierra Madre, Northeast Luzon.



The Philippine mouse deer is critically endangered. Also known as Pilandok or Balabac chevrotain, the Philippine mouse deer is a unique creature only found in Palawan. They are small in stature and resemble exactly what their name describes: a mix of a mouse and a deer. It does not belong to the deer family. It is nocturnal and eats mostly plants, leaves, fruits and sometimes insects. The species is in continuing decline due to poaching for food and affected by habitat loss, as its forest home is converted to oil palm plantations.



The tarsiers are tiny leaping primates found mostly in Bohol. A definite tourist attraction for the island, they are fascinating creatures with big eyes, tiny bodies, and long rat-like tails. Tarsiers are the only known carnivorous primates and prey on insects, lizards, and sometimes even snakes. They usually cling upright to trees and branches and can live in monogamous pairs. Tarsiers are easily stressed and become self-destructive when they are held in captivity or even just touched. This species is not only critically endangered but its population is threatened. As of 2017, the International Primate Protection League estimated only 5,000 and 10,000 Philippine tarsiers left in the wild and the number is plummeting.



The Philippine Turtle is found in Palawan and is among the most critically endangered turtle species in the world. For a while, the Philippine Forest Turtle was believed to have been extinct, but a few specimens were found again somewhere in Northern Palawan. This brought the species into existence again in 2004. Unfortunately, this rediscovery brought about a negative effect as it made poachers get into a frenzy of capturing the turtles to sell as pets, make them into traditional medicine, and even food. Numerous environmental bodies have placed the population of this species at 10,000 individuals scattered in the identified Palawan municipalities as of 2018.

If we are to preserve and sustain our wildlife we must stop destroying their habitat, poaching, polluting and consuming them. Otherwise let us be prepared for worsening climate change, the surge in epidemics and lethal diseases in the years to come. We have a choice of short-term gain or sustainability of humanity and the planet.

By Rose de la Cruz



Online illegal wildlife trade targeting PHL's monitor lizards

By [JONATHAN L. MAYUGA](#)

MARCH 7, 2021



The Asian water monitor, also called common water monitor, is a large varanid lizard native to South and Southeast Asia. It is one of the most common monitor lizards in Asia.

Commonly seen in forests, lakes, ponds, rivers or streams, Philippine "bayawak," or monitor lizards, are fast-becoming the most common traded wildlife in the Philippines. The Internet and smartphone technologies, with the help of social media, are driving them to the brink of extinction.

Hunted for their skin, meat and parts, these large forest lizards are now fast-becoming a popular pet among so-called hobbyists. They are kept in the aquarium while still young, and later on transferred to man-made lagoons or ponds with steel mesh as they grow older and bigger.

Through the Internet in computers or smartphones, buying and selling of wild monitor lizards are now openly done in social media, pushing the endangered species to the brink of extinction.

While the trade of the monitor lizards in the Philippines is relatively small compared to other markets, such as Japan, Europe and the United States, the authors of the report, "The Trade of Live Monitor Lizards [Varanidae] in the Philippines," Emerson Y. Sy and Antonio N. Lorenzo of nongovernment group Traffic named the Philippines both as importer and exporter of illegally sourced and traded monitor lizards.

This highlighted the need for authorities to step up the work in curbing illegal wildlife trade in the country.

Ecosystem function

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) said it is important to protect and conserve monitor lizards because they are vital constituents of the food web.

Monitor lizards feed on a variety of food types, such as insects, crabs, snakes, fish, etc., thereby controlling the population of their prey.

In turn, they are a source of food to larger predators, such as crocodiles and raptors.

In addition, monitor lizards are also excellent ecological indicators due to their high degree of sensitivity to even a minor change in the environment.

At the same time, as some Philippine monitor lizards are uniquely fruit-eating species, they also play the role of a unique seed disperser in the forest.

Endemic species

There are 11 known monitor lizard species in the Philippines which are native and endemic to certain restricted areas in the country.

Three of them are the only known frugivorous, or fruit-eating, species in the world. They are the northern Sierra Madre forest, Gray's and Panay monitor lizards.



The others are the Bangon water monitor lizard, Philippine yellow-headed water monitor, Enteng's water monitor lizard, marbled water monitor lizard, Philippine white-headed monitor lizard, Palawan monitor lizard, Rasmussen's water monitor lizard, and Samar water monitor lizard.

'Bayawak' for sale

Anchored on the 30-month online study and review of 30 years (1989–2018) of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) trade data, the study revealed that a total of 541 individual bayawak representing 13 species were documented for sale from September 2017 to February 2020.

Sold from as low as \$8 to \$29 (P436.64 to P1,407) to as high as \$16,667 (P808,616.17) depending on the species, the monitor lizards are both imported and exported, the CITES trade data analysis show.

The Philippines imported 671 live individuals of 20 species from at least 20 countries, and exported 144 live individuals of nine species during the period of 1989 to 2018, the study said.

Online shopping

As social networking sites, such as Facebook, has become the most popular marketplace in the world, online buying and selling has become a breeze for a wide range of products, including illegally sourced or collected wild plants and animals.

It became even more popular during the community lockdowns put in place last year by governments worldwide due to the pandemic.

Ironically, whether they are plants or animals, wildlife trading is illegal in the Philippines unless the trader is armed with special permits from the DENR or the BMB.

Some of the laws that make wildlife trade illegal are the Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Act; Republic Act 9072, or the Caves Act, Republic Act 7586, or the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) Act and its amended version, the Republic Act 11038 or the Expanded Nipas Act.

The DENR or the BMB has not issued a special permit for harvesting monitor lizards in the wild since 2001. Yet the report noted the rampant online trading in Facebook, which became the subject of the online survey.

Market price

With the market shift from physical to online trade, the report revealed that on Facebook alone, a total of 359 monitor lizard posts by 187 unique accounts involving 13 species and 541 individual animals were documented during the 30-month online survey of 20 Facebook groups.

The quantity of monitor lizards per post ranged from 1 to 40 individuals. The typical price of a juvenile, ranged from P700 to P1,500, or as low as P400 per individual.

One post documented by the authors even offered a CITES Appendix I-listed Komodo dragon for P850,000 in August 2018. CITES Appendix I list include the most endangered species.

The authors noted that out of the 187 unique accounts, at least 11 traders had been observed to use at least two Facebook accounts.

Deactivated Facebook groups, accounts

Interviewed via Messenger on March 1, Sy noted that Facebook has shut down secret and private groups suspected of promoting online illegal wildlife trade.

By Sy's estimate, 344 groups were deactivated by Facebook so far. The oldest group was created in December 2009 with a membership ranging from 6, which was created a few days before it was deactivated, to nearly 52,000 individual accounts.



While Facebook is a member of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online and is working with Traffic and others through a multifaceted approach to address the issue, Sy said the system could only do so much.

Encouraging Netizens to report to Facebook via its system the suspicious groups or accounts, he said, it is a “hit or miss.” The system cannot detect groups and accounts that use coded messages in transacting business, he said.

However, although hundreds of accounts have been deactivated, hundreds more are expected to take its place.

“There are now newly created groups. It will be good to ask Facebook what it can do to prevent this? Do they plan to deactivate or suspend the accounts that create these groups also?” he asked.

Online surveillance

Wildlife law enforcers from the DENR-BMB and the DENR-led Task Force Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife (Pogi) are conducting online surveillance to combat illegal wildlife trade, now a P50-billion annual underground economy.

Facebook’s deactivation of secret and private groups used by wildlife traders was confirmed by Rogelio Demelletes, senior science specialist and a member of the Task Force Pogi.

“Even my own accounts which I use in my surveillance operations were deactivated, too,” he said.

Gargantuan task

DENR-BMB Acting Director Amelita D.J. Ortiz said while the department is working to curb the illegal wildlife trade, its limited resources is unable to cover the magnitude and scale of the online illegal business.

“The DENR cannot do this alone, that is why we are working with other government agencies and the law enforcement units like the National Bureau of Investigation,” Ortiz told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview on March 1.

She said the DENR is also banking on the help and support of netizens to report suspicious activities so the concerned authorities could act appropriately.

Transnational crime

The online illegal wildlife trade is not unique to the Philippines. It is a global problem as markets go online to reach out to more buyers, said Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

Because of the profitability of illegal wildlife trade, it grew into one of the largest transnational crimes next to humans, drugs and arms trafficking over the decades.

Lim told the BusinessMirror via Messenger that the move of illegal wildlife trade to online markets have been reported in recent years.

“Online wildlife trafficking has escalated the illegal trade, with millions of online users potentially having direct access to illegal suppliers all over the world with just a few clicks. This makes it more difficult for authorities to detect and to take effective action,” said Lim, a former DENR-BMB director.

She said that authorities of Asean member states have also reported arrests and convictions of online wildlife traders, and seizures of traded wild animals and their parts.

Lim said last year, the National Bureau of Investigation-Environmental Crime Division of the Philippines arrested two online wildlife traders and seized 42 turtles and tortoises in one operation.



Also last year, an Indonesian court convicted an online wildlife trader caught with over a dozen reptiles, including a critically endangered turtle.

In 2018, Malaysia seized over 680 wildlife and parts in three separate operations against wildlife cybercrime.

Concerted effort

Lim said there has been a concerted effort by authorities, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to regulate online spaces.

In 2018, technology companies, including Google and Facebook, which also owns Instagram and WhatsApp, she said, pledged to combat wildlife cybercrime.

“Yet, a variety of virtual markets are still easily available for those involved in the trade, despite efforts to curb illegal trade online. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2020 report cites an example of this difficulty when in May 2019, Facebook added a functionality to its site enabling the public to report illegal wildlife trade, and subsequently shut down various Indonesian Facebook groups,” she noted. However, the illegal traders moved to alternative media platforms, even keeping the same group names they had on Facebook.

“These efforts take time to create impact. But we believe that over time and with more users made aware of the effects of illegal trade, there will be more civil society policing to weed out illegal sellers, buyers and groups and put pressure on online companies to take responsibility for illegal activities on their platforms,” Lim said.

“National legislations have to keep up with this trend, as many of the existing laws may not enable enforcers to take action on [the illegal activity] online. Authorities also have to be innovative in their approach to deter wildlife cybercriminals,” she added.

According to Lim, Asean have laudable initiatives that are worth supporting or replicating.

She said online trade, including on wildlife, is regulated by law in Vietnam.

“However, the challenge in the prosecution of these cases is in collecting adequate evidence,” she said. Meanwhile, in Malaysia and the Philippines, the governments are in the process of amending their respective wildlife laws to address advertising and illegal online trade.

In Thailand, its Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation has established the “Forest Hawk” Task Force that has established a social media group.

It urged all Thai and international wildlife conservation NGOs to share information on suspicious activities, and enforcement action among its members.

Building capacity

Lim said building capacity among the wildlife and other related authorities to monitor online trade—specializing in investigation and prosecution of online wildlife crimes, infiltrate existing online wildlife markets, collect evidence using digital forensics and develop institutional enforcement strength focused on wildlife and cybercrimes—is needed to address the gaps in combatting illegal wildlife trade.

“New technology should be constantly learned and employed to strengthen these efforts and keep up with the changes,” she said.

In parallel to these efforts, Lim added that every individual who uses social media should be equipped with the knowledge and appreciation for the importance of species to remain in their natural habitat.

“They should help report such activities to the authorities as well as put pressure on sellers, buyers and those who create spaces for illegal wildlife trade in order to drive them out of the virtual marketplace, just like how they are being driven out of physical markets, shops and trade shows, she said.



“At the regional level, it would be beneficial to implement mechanisms to develop capacity and share information among countries on the presence of online illegal wildlife trade operations and identified online criminal organizations, especially those with transnational illicit operations,” Lim said.

Image credits: [Gregg Yan](#)



Four traders arrested over Bayawak sale in Pampanga

posted March 07, 2021 at 11:20 pm

by [Jess Malabanan](#)

GUAGUA, Pampanga—Four alleged traders of monitor lizards, an endangered species, were arrested by local police here following an entrapments operations in separate locations in Porac town.

Police Lt. Colonel. Julius Javier, Guagua police chief identified the suspects as Raymond Sto. Domingo, 27, of Barangay Tokwing, and Marlon Bacani, 37, of Bgy. Babo Sakan, both of Porac, Pampanga.

The two others suspects whose ages ranges from 15 to 17 were turned over to the Social Welfare Development Office for custody.

Laudemir Salac, Pampanga Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) said trade of wildlife is prohibited by law.

“Collecting, hunting, or possessing and trading of wildlife is punishable by a maximum imprisonment of one year and a fine of up to one million pesos, depending on the species, under the law,” said Salac.

He said the bayawak which was sold has already been rescued and will undergo rehabilitation in a wildlife center before being released back into its natural habitat.

Meanwhile, Paquito Moreno, Jr., executive director of the DENR in Central Luzon warned the public against catching and selling wildlife, and even eating its bushmeat to prevent the spread of another disease.

“If COVID-19 pandemic taught us lessons, the same with wildlife, we have to live and let live,” Moreno pointed out adding that consumption of wildlife is not just illegal but also exposes people to the dangers of catching and spreading zoonotic diseases.

Moreno expressed his gratitude to the public including the netizen who continue to be vigilant in monitoring and reporting wildlife and other environmental crimes. He also appealed to the public to report to the nearest DENR office or the official social media page and e-mail address any illegal wildlife activities.

Last year, DENR Pampanga also rescued 11 monitor lizards from two illegal wildlife traders in Lubao town.

Since 2015, DENR Region 3 has saved 300 various wildlife species from illegal trade and filed criminal charges against 20 individuals.

Image credits: [Gregg Yan](#)



DENR orders Pangasinan landfill shut down

posted March 07, 2021 at 09:50 pm

by [Rio N. Araja](#)

Following the directive of Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu to strictly enforce Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, a sanitary landfill facility (SLF) in Urdaneta City, Pangasinan has been closed for failure to address violations within the set deadline.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-Environmental Management Bureau-Region 1 Director Maria Dorica Naz-Hipe, together with DENR local officials, served the cease and desist order (CDO) to stop the operation of the Urdaneta City Engineered Sanitary Landfill (SLF) in Barangay Catablan, Urdaneta City on Friday (March 5).

Last January, the 18,000-square meter SLF was issued two CDOs for violations of environmental laws, which include RA 9003 and RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda, who made a surprised inspection of the site on January 27, gave the management of the Urdaneta SLF until February 2021 "to implement the improvements, such as constructing a water treatment facility, siphoning the garbage seepage, and identifying an ideal new cell, among others." Rio N. Araja

Antiporda even met with Urdaneta City Mayor Julio F. Parayno III and advised them to rehabilitate their SLF. "Magtulongan tayo. Tutulongan namin kayo para maging model ang Urdaneta City sa solid waste management especially on SLF," he added.

However, during a follow up inspection conducted on March 1 by the DENR regional office, it was found that the Urdaneta SLF has still not complied with the DENR order. There was no action taken by the local government unit.

Antiporda said the engineered SLF "was given a grace period to correct the necessary violations, but they were not able to do so."

"With the marching order of DENR Secretary Cimatu to close all dumpsites by the end of March, the demand for SLFs increased significantly in several areas across the country. SLFs are a better alternative to open dumpsites, but this does not guarantee that they will be given the permit to operate right away," he said.

"We want to send a strong message to all those who take the reminders for granted. We assure the public that we will remain vigilant so we will be able to protect the Filipino people and the country's environment," he added.

Around 169 open dumpsites are still operating across the country, based on DENR data.

To date, 107 open dumpsites have been closed down following Cimatu's directive to close all open dumpsites by the end of March.



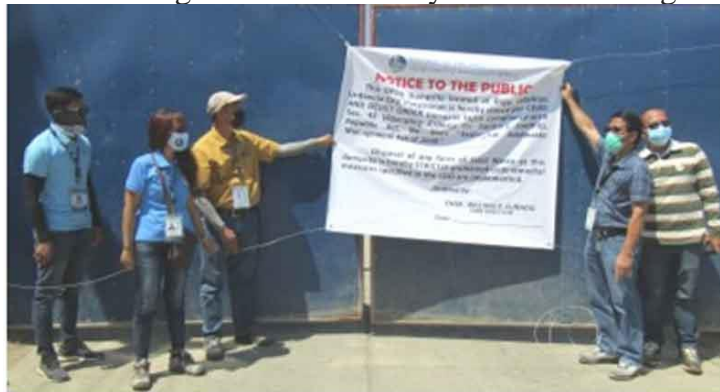
DENR shuts down open dump

By [Jaime G. Aquino](#)

March 8, 2021

URDANETA CITY, Pangasinan: Officers and members of the Citizens Movement Against Corruption, Crime, Illegal Drugs and Gambling Inc. headed by Prof. Salvador Singson-de Guzman and thousands of residents in 14 villages here have commended the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) for issuing a cease-and-desist order for the closure of a sanitary landfill in Barangay Catablan in the city for several violations.

De Guzman said the closure was ordered by DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu based on a recommendation of his group, and on results of investigation conducted by EMB Ilocos Regional Director Dorica Hipe.



LANDFILL 'LOCKDOWN' Officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) closed on March 5, 2021 the gates of the Urdaneta City sanitary landfill. A cease-and-desist order had been issued by the central office for the landfill to stop its operation. PHOTO BY JAIME G. AQUINO

The department had ordered the probe after the residents of four villages in Matulong and Parian in Manaoag town; Leet, Matic-matic, Menien East and Menien West in Sta. Barbara town; Aserda, Primicias, Luyan, Torres and Lambayan in Mapandan town; and Pinmaludpud, Labit West and Catablan in Urdaneta City approached the group of De Guzman and asked the latter to bring their complaint to the DENR, citing a thorough and investigative report made by this writer and published in The Manila Times.

The citizens movement thanked The Times management for coming out with the report, which was used by DENR officials as a basis for conducting the inquiry into the landfill.

The open dump was being operated by the Urdaneta city government and the barangay (village) council of Catablan that were allegedly collecting more than P7 million in monthly revenue, but it was not clear whether such amount was remitted to the city treasurer's office.

Majority of employees providing security to the open dump are members of the Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO) in Catablan who are also collecting P120 per truckload of waste without issuing any official receipt from the city government, according to De Guzman.

He said his group is planning to file criminal and administrative charges against the responsible public officials who ordered the collection by the CVO.

In her report, Hipe said the landfill violated the Clean Water Act, Presidential Decree 1586 or the Philippine Environmental Impact Statement and Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

“The violation under RA 9003 [pertains to] the operation of an open dump. Although it is a sanitary landfill, what happened is that they just dumped the waste and it was no longer being managed. It is no longer based on the operation of a sanitary landfill that it has become an open dump,” she added.



Hipe said the Urdaneta landfill also violated the Clean Water Act as analysis of its water sample exceeded the effluent standard.

“The conditions of the environmental compliance certificate issued to the local government unit (LGU) for the operation of the sanitary landfill were not complied with like the designation of a control officer, submission of a compliance report, and [assurance] that the operation of the landfill [is] in accordance with the guidelines for [its] proper operation and management,” she added.

Meanwhile, Mayor Julio Parayno 3rd said they will appeal to the DENR to allow Urdaneta City to still use the landfill for their waste.

“We will do away with the other LGUs dumping in the landfill. More or less, there are 30 LGUs under contract,” he added in an interview.

Parayno said the private company they had a contract with for rehabilitation of the landfill did not deliver as expected.

“We cannot close it yet because of breach of contract but now it is the DENR that issued the closure. This private company will have to answer to the LGUs that have contracted for the use of the landfill,” he added.

Hipe said the LGU may take legal recourse but in the meantime, the sanitary landfill will be closed. The DENR order was served to the LGU on Friday and the DENR-EMB team proceeded to the landfill to ensure its closure.



DENR shuts Pangasinan sanitary landfill

March 7, 2021 | 7:50 pm



PHILSTAR

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has closed an 18,000-square meter sanitary landfill in Urdaneta City, Pangasinan on Friday, after the facility failed to address its violations within the deadline set for it.

In a statement issued over the weekend, the DENR said that its Region 1 Director Maria Dorica Naz-Hipe and local environment officials served the cease-and-desist order (CDO) on the sanitary landfill in Barangay Catablan.

In January, the Urdaneta landfill received two CDOs for violating the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and the Philippine Clean Water Act. The landfill had until February to improve its facilities by “adding a water treatment facility, siphoning garbage seepage and identifying a new ideal cell, among others,” DENR Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda said.

At a follow-up inspection on March 1, the DENR found out that the facility was still not in compliance. “There was no action taken by the local government unit. (Mr.) Antiporda said that the engineered sanitary landfill was given a grace period to correct the necessary violations, but they were not able to do so,” the department said in a statement.

Mr. Antiporda said that although sanitary landfills were “better alternatives to open dumpsites,” this alone did not immediately guarantee a permit to operate.

“With the marching orders of DENR Secretary (Roy A.) Cimatu to close all dumpsites by end of March, the demand for SLFs increased significantly in several areas across the country... We want to send a strong message to all those who take the reminders for granted,” he was quoted as saying.

Open dumps are sites where solid waste is deposited without planning and consideration for the environment and health standards. They are illegal to establish or operate. At present, there are some 169 open dumps that are still operating nationwide. A sanitary landfill is a waste disposal site where possible significant environmental impacts are controlled, according to the environment department. — **Angelica Y. Yang**



DENR partners with CDC for 'green initiative'

[IAN OCAMPO FLORA](#)

March 07, 2021

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Pampanga and Clark Development Corporation (CDC) recently partnered for a tree-growing activity at the Boy Scout Jamboree Site in Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga as part of the “green initiative” campaign and in a bid to mitigate the effects of global warming and climate change.

Laudemir Salac, DENR provincial head in Pampanga, said DENR Assistant Secretary for Field Operations – Mindanao and Legislative Affairs Joan Lagunda and CDC President and Chief Executive Officer Manuel R. Gaerlan led the planting of 75 Narra (*Pterocarpus indicus*) and Molave (*Vitex parviflora*) seedlings during the event.

“We carefully chose the two native tree species not just for their beauty, but for their resiliency in the urban setting and against an extreme climatic event like global warming” he said.

Gaerlan said the green initiative program is part of the government’s efforts to accelerate and sustain the dream of Clark of becoming a green and sustainable city that is striving to balance ecological, economic and social needs, to ensure a clean, healthy, and safe environment now and for the generations to come.

Lagunda lauded the CDC and National Defense College of the Philippines's (NDCP's) efforts in making the tree-growing activity a reality, adding that government partners like CDC and NDCP have been valuable in the country’s reforestation efforts.

“Their spirit of volunteerism may be the key to climate change mitigation and could pave the way for achieving our ‘ambisyon’ of a green and sustainable future.” she added.

More than 122,000 hectares of forest plantations have been established by the DENR in Central Luzon under the National Greening Program (NGP) since 2011.

In 2020, over 60 private industries, academic institutions, and non-government organizations partnered with DENR in the maintenance and protection of established NGP forest plantations.

Government officials who also actively participated in the event are Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Managing Director Antonio Lambino II, Presidential Communications Operations Office Assistant Secretary lawyer Omar Alexander Romero, Office of the President Assistant Secretary Erwin Enad, and NDCP Chief Defense Research Officer, Rostum Bautista.



More logs recovered from Aurora shoreline

By: [Tonette Orejas](#) - [@ttorejasINQ](#)

[Inquirer Central Luzon](#) / 03:05 PM March 07, 2021



Logs that were cut in various lengths and believed to be from Papua New Guinea were recovered in different coastal towns of Aurora province. Contributed photo

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO — Fishermen in Aurora province have retrieved more logs believed to have come from Papua New Guinea. Since the logs were first seen floating on February 12 off Aurora, some 632 have been recovered, reports gathered by the INQUIRER showed.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Coast Guard are sending a reconnaissance team this week to check if more logs are still floating, according to DENR provincial officer Alfred Collado in a phone interview on Sunday.

With different lengths and widths, the logs bore stickers marked “Papua New Guinea Forest Authority,” DENR and police photographs showed.

Collado clarified that the logs were not locally cut because tree species like *Terminalia brassii* and *Pometia* are native to Papua New Guinea.

Oyster and algae growth indicate that the logs have been floating in water for quite some time.

The central towns of Baler and nearby San Luis as well as the northern town of Dilasag have recovered more logs than other towns.

Collado said the logs, piled up in various locations, are now in the custody of DENR teams, police, and barangay councils.

He said the Papua New Guinea government has not replied yet to the information relayed by the Philippines about the logs.

The fishermen who towed the logs to shore have explicitly told the DENR of wanting to own or use these if not claimed by the true owner. The fishermen also asked to be paid for fuel and labor should the owner retake the logs.

“They’re been waiting for updates. Some are impatient but they try to understand,” Collado said.
INQ

/MUF



FAO taps Searca for forest monitoring, climate finance project in Palawan

By [BUSINESSMIRROR](#)

MARCH 7, 2021

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has commissioned the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) to develop a pioneering jurisdictional-level platform for Palawan for the management and monitoring of forest and landscape climate finance investments.

“As both carbon source and sink, forests play a key role in climate change mitigation. To achieve a significant emissions reduction, there is a need for investment in forest landscape and climate finance to support scalable approaches and programs, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+),” Searca Director Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio said.

He explained that there is a need to demonstrate profitable business models for forest restoration that target environmental and social benefits to engage the private sector as investors, service providers or implementers beyond their corporate social responsibility advocacy.

Private investor engagement is key to the sustainability of environmental efforts.

On the other hand, Dr. Rico C. Ancog, Searca program lead for Emerging Innovation for Growth and Associate Professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), said the correct determination of the scale of crediting for emissions reduction from the forest sector is also key to achieving the objective of REDD+, with entire jurisdictions likely to be the optimal scale because only governments have the main authority to regulate land use change.

In the case of the FAO-funded project, Ancog said the operational example of a jurisdictional-level platform being developed for Palawan is intended to “support quantitative evaluation for forest monitoring and leveraging, and landscape climate finance at the jurisdictional scale.”

He explained that the project will assess the viability of Palawan to follow a Jurisdictional Sustainability (JS) Approach and identify potential financing sources.

According to Dr. Daniel Nepstad, the president of the Earth Innovation Institute based in Berkeley, California, the JS is achieved when an entire political geography or region also coincides with the correct ecological scale of a given environmental problem and completes the transition to sustainable development.

Specifically, the Searca project will “determine if Palawan has the components to operationalize JS, the gaps of JS and climate investment and how to address them, the government’s role in the implementation of JS, and the comparative approaches versus reforestation and afforestation management and the REDD+ Approach.”

Moreover, Ancog said the jurisdictional-level platform being developed will facilitate the analysis of multi-stakeholders and the layers of the government to provide sufficient information to the private sector on how their investment will be managed and monitored to align corporate governance to that of forest conservation vis-à-vis climate change mitigation initiatives.

To raise awareness on the merits of the JS Approach, the project collaborators, together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources’ (DENR) Forest Management Bureau and DENR-Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, jointly organized an online forum recently on Jurisdictional Sustainability Approach for Climate Change Initiatives in the Forestry and Natural Resources Sector.



During the forum, Ancog shared some initial takeaways of the project. One is the “ability to find solutions to forest management challenges that were effectively analyzed based on the correct ecological scale. In turn, such solutions for climate change mitigation must be designed not just in response to gaps in knowledge and awareness gaps, but also to impediments in governance.”

He also noted that governance innovations is needed, particularly in relation to different forms of forest resource tenure so that climate change initiatives balance environmental conservation and economic development.

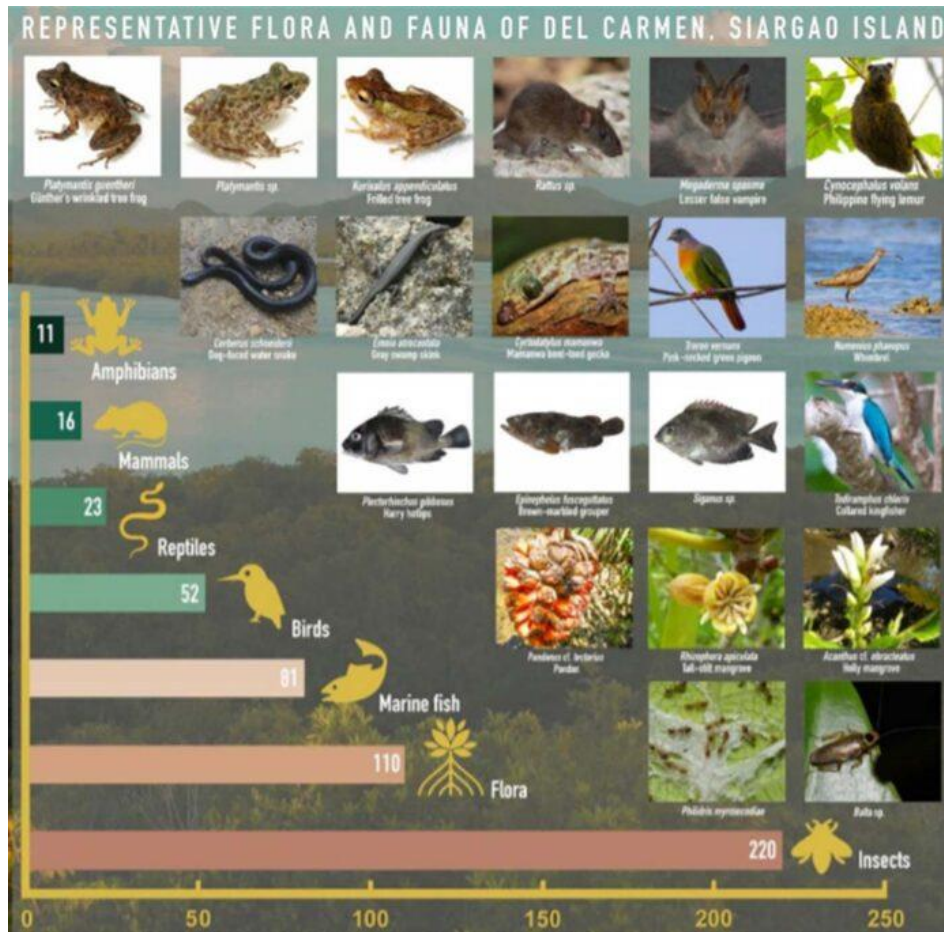


NRCP: Siargao is home to hundreds of fauna, flora

Not only a surfing capital of the Philippines

By **BUSINESSMIRROR**

MARCH 7, 2021



The highly diversified mangrove flora in Del Carmen, Siargao.

There is more to Siargao Island than its being named as the Surfing Capital of the Philippines. It is recorded to be a home to hundreds of species of flora and fauna—another proof that the Philippines surely has a rich diversified ecosystem.

The municipality of Del Carmen alone has recorded a total of 110 species of plants and 403 species of animals from the aquatic and terrestrial habitats, said a news release from the National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP).

A study conducted by members of the Division V (Biological Sciences) of NRCP, led by Dr. Cecilia Banag-Moran, has found remarkable plant and beach forest species.

The study also discovered that there are possible new species of frog, rat, tarsier, insects, marine fish and decapod crustaceans in Del Carmen, Siargao.

“With this rich diversity, a move for the global importance of Del Carmen, Siargao, should be considered for its conservation and sustainability,” the news release said.

Consider these identified species of animals: 11 amphibians, 14 mammals, 23 reptiles, 52 birds, and 81 marine fish.

What’s more, it was found that nine species of plants and 34 species of terrestrial vertebrates are endemic to the Philippines.



In addition to this, 45 species of plants and 17 species of terrestrial vertebrates are not yet assessed for their conservation status.

Also, according to the NRCP study, the amphibians and reptiles in mangroves and surrounding habitats are in excellent condition, which prompted the project researchers to recommend for the need to place protection measures in the area.

On the other hand, the highly diverse Del Carmen mangrove forest is home of interesting species, host to unique floral assemblages, and haven of high floral diversity.

According to the study, out of the 54 mangrove species in the world, Del Carmen has 19, or 35.19 percent, of the world species.

“There is also a remarkable record of new 90 species of marine flora, thus, the need for continuance of correct and diversified mangrove planting,” the NRCP said.

Overall, “this data will support the request for Del Carmen, Siargao, to be listed as new Ramsar Site in the Philippines,” it added. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands’s primary aim is to conserve and sustain the utilization of wetlands. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the convention was signed in 1971.

The accord also seeks to recognize the significant ecological roles played by the wetlands and their scientific, recreational, cultural, and economic significance.

To date, there are six wetland habitats in the Philippines that have been designated as Ramsar wetlands of international importance.

The presence of a threatened and endemic flora and fauna and possible new species, aside from the high diversity in the area is sufficient support for the Del Carmen Mangrove Forest to be listed under Ramsar for its long term conservation and sustainable utilization, the NRCP said.

Besides the move to consider Del Carmen as a new Ramsar site, the project recommends for policy conservation and protection of Siargao ecosystems and its biodiversity resources.

The study was under the Saklaw (Saklolo sa Lawa—Sustainable Communities) of the National Integrated Basic Research Agenda (Nibra) initiative of the NRCP.

It was conducted, in response to Siargao local government unit’s request for scientific evidence to support their bid for Ramsar.

The study assessed the biodiversity of the mangrove forests in Del Carmen, Siargao Island, through biological field surveys

A three-pager Photoguide of the Birds of Del Carmen Siargao has been produced under the study. The comprehensive results of the project were presented by the researchers during the stakeholders meeting, which was attended by the heads of the municipality of Del Carmen, Mayor Proserfina M. Coro and Vice Mayor Alfredo M. Coro II, on January 6 via online, the NRCP said.

Image credits: [NRCP](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/07/nrcp-siargao-is-home-to-hundreds-of-fauna-flora/>



P160M worth of endangered giant clam shells seized in Palawan

Published March 7, 2021, 11:47 AM

by [Richa Noriega](#)

Authorities seized some 80 tons of giant clam shells in a raid in a remote barangay in Palawan, the biggest haul confiscated as part of the government's efforts to protect the endangered sea creatures.

<https://web.facebook.com/coastguardph/posts/705968020071855>

In a statement, the Philippine Coast Guard said the giant clam shells were covered with sands on a beach in Barangay Johnson VI in Johnson Island in Roxas town of Palawan. The seized items have a value of P160 million in the black market.

Locally known as 'taklobo', the giant clam shells are being used to make various products that include personal accessories to house decorations and displays. Smugglers have been harvesting them as a replacement to the ivory and being sold to the black market.

Harvesting the endangered giant clams locally known as "taklobo" is prohibited under Republic Act No. 10654 or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998.

"This is the biggest haul of its kind in Palawan," the PCG said in a statement.

"Violators shall be penalized with an administrative fine of up to three million pesos and suffer imprisonment of up to eight years," it added.



Tighten enforcement of environmental laws

By ... -March 8, 2021

‘As in other shenanigans, government officials were reported as involved in this latest violation of environmental laws...’

PICTURES in newspapers have a way of jolting the senses of the public when it comes to crime (the misencounter among two groups of anti-drugs law enforcers, the PDEA and the Quezon City police, resulting in 4 deaths of lawmen and an informant) and environment degradation (tons of “taklobo” or giant clams seized by authorities in Palawan).

In the coastal town of Roxas, Palawan, a joint team of the Philippine Coast Guard and Philippine Marines uncovered a rather ambitious smuggling and illicit trade in giant clams. They discovered 324 pieces of the giant clam shells, with a combined weight of 80 tons and an estimated worth of around P160 million, in the black market. The hoard, one of the biggest in recent memory, was hidden in a pit along the beach in Barangay 6, Johnson island, and covered with sand.

The fishermen and residents of this fishing village, particularly those involved in hiding and trafficking these contraband, do not realize the risk of what they did. Coast Guard officials said harvesting endangered giant clams is prohibited under the law, and that violators may be charged and if found guilty, jailed for three years and fined P3 million. More than these legal sanctions, the perpetrators have to be reminded that giant clams and other endangered species have an important role to play in the hierarchy of life in the oceans, and that cutting them off from the environment is detrimental to the overall functioning of the marine ecosystem.

As in other shenanigans, government officials were reported as involved in this latest violation of environmental laws, as a barangay chairman will be charged for poaching for supervising the illegal collection of the giant shells, the authorities said.

Experts said it should take the village residents some six months to one year to amass this biggest haul of “taklobo,” collecting them in a large pit on the beach. It is just to the credit of the Coast Guard and the military (not the Philippine National Police, which should be in the forefront of enforcement of environmental laws) that this illegal operation was uncovered.

It is important to remind the people, especially the residents of Palawan which is one of the last frontiers of biodiversity in the country, that the giant clam, known also as *Tridacna gigas*, is the largest bivalve mollusk in the world. It was classified in 1996 as a vulnerable species in the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red list. The clams provide nutritious and tasty meat while the shells are made into jewelry, table lamps, religious icons, wash basins in restaurants, and other exotic products.

Palawan and other far-flung provinces near the sea both in the eastern and western coasts of the Philippines should strengthen their conservation measures if we are to leave something for the next generation.

Source: https://malaya.com.ph/index.php/news_opinion/tighten-enforcement-of-environmental-laws/



PH Coast Guard seizes P160 million worth of giant clam shells in Palawan

Philippine coast Guard (PCG) handout via AFP

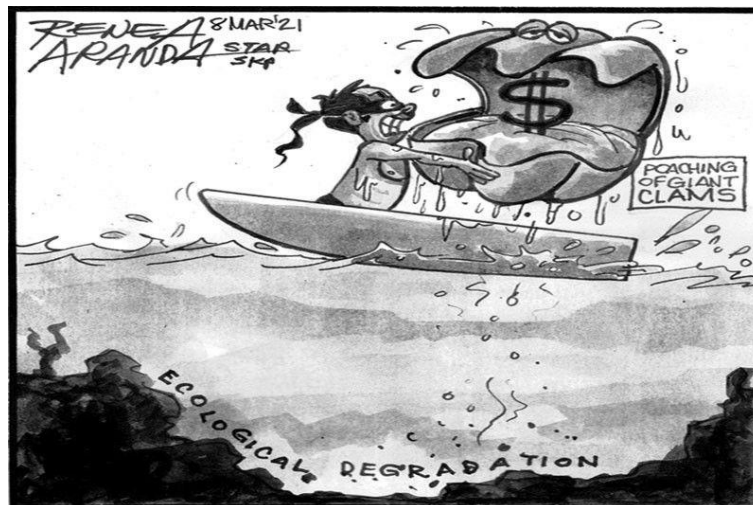
Posted at Mar 07 2021 03:23 PM



This handout photo released by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) on March 5, 2021 shows coast guard personnel, marine troops and local conservation officials unearthing illegally harvested giant clams at Barangay VI, Johnson Island, Roxas, Palawan province on March 3. The PCG along with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS), Marine Battalion Landing Team 3 (MBLT-3), and Bantay Dagat Roxas seized a total of 324 pieces of giant clam shells weighing 80 tons with estimated market value of 160 million pesos.

Republic Act No. 10654 or The Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 prohibits the harvesting of endangered giant clams, locally called 'taklobo,'

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/multimedia/photo/03/07/21/ph-coast-guard-seizes-p160-million-worth-of-giant-clam-shells-in-palawan>



EDITORIAL - Illegal harvest

(The Philippine Star) - March 8, 2021 - 12:00am

It can take decades for a giant clam to achieve its full size, which could be up to 1.3 meters long and a hefty 500 kilograms. While the clams can be prolific in spawning, only a few manage to attain full growth. The giant clam is officially listed as a threatened species, but conservationists believe that in certain habitats, some species are endangered or are already extinct.

It is disheartening to see giant clams being illegally harvested so the shells can end up as decorations in a garden or as part of chandeliers and even buttons, and their muscle meat eaten in exotic food establishments. Conservationists fear that the giant mollusks, found in coral reefs in tropical waters, are being harvested to extinction all over the Indo-Pacific.

Such fears were further stoked by the recent discovery of 324 pieces of giant clam shells on Johnson Island in the town of Roxas in Palawan. Weighing 80 tons, the Philippine Coast Guard described the seized clams as “the biggest haul of its kind” in the province. Conservationists believe the clams were gathered over six months to a year from the eastern coasts of Palawan.

The province, rich in biodiversity, has been a target of traffickers of wildlife such as pangolins, seahorses, marine turtles, macaws and cockatoos.

Harvesting of giant clams or taklobo is prohibited under Republic Act 10654 or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, which imposes penalties of up to eight years in prison and fines of up to P8 million. Wildlife trafficking, however, can be highly lucrative. The Coast Guard said the seized giant clams have an estimated market value of P160 million.

The only deterrent is effective enforcement of the law, whose provisions are tough enough. Roxas town is not large; it shouldn't be too hard to identify those behind the harvesting of the clams – both the ones who actually gathered the mollusks and those who financed the operation. Once caught, they must all face the full force of the law. As in other crimes, failure to punish perpetrators breeds impunity in wildlife trafficking.



Nickel Asia companies are environmental champions for 2020

By [BMPLUS](#)

MARCH 7, 2021



“The PMIEA trophy depicts environmental excellence in every stage of mining operations. It speaks of pro-people and pro-environment characteristics of the mining industry in sustaining wealth creation and improving the quality of life”

The awarding of the prestigious Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award (PMIEA) to two mining companies under the umbrella of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC), is regarded as doubly special as it was conferred during the pandemic year.

Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC), based in Valencia, in Dinagat Islands, and Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. (RTNMC), based in Bataraza in Palawan, are this year’s proud PMIEA honorees presented with the “Presidential trophy” for outstanding initiatives in the pursuit of excellence in environmental management. CMC and RTNMC are subsidiaries of NAC, the country’s largest nickel supplier.

According to the Mines and Geoscience Bureau (MGB), an agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the award is given to operating mines that have shown exemplary performance in the area of environmental enhancement and protection; safety and health; social development; and corporate social responsibility.

“The award for 2020 is made more significant because of the unprecedented challenges posted by COVID-19. Our employees had to exert double efforts and had to sacrifice personal time in order to achieve our goals, to ensure 100 percent implementation of our commitments to all our stakeholders in the mining communities” explains Engr. Arnilo C. Milaor, Resident Mine Manager at CMC.

This is a back-to-back win for the Dinagat-based mining company which also collected the Presidential Award last year.

Cagdianao Mining’s commitment is to the tune of **P55.5 Million pesos** worth of *Annual Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program (AEPEP)* and **P47.3 Million pesos** for the development of CMC’s host and neighboring communities through the company’s Social Development Management Programs (SDMP) for 2020 alone.

*“The improved living conditions in the mining areas are proof of our commitment to the communities. One outstanding CMC project for example is the 19.2-kilometer farm-to-market road worth **P12 Million pesos**, connecting 5 barangays from 2 municipalities to the main provincial road, effectively providing the residents access to basic services like the hospital, and, most importantly, efficient access to trade and commerce,”* says Engr. Aloysius C. Diaz, NAC VP for Operations.



Rio Tuba Nickel, which has won this most-coveted “*Presidential Award*” for 4 times – 2002, 2015, 2018, and 2020 – never stopped operations and continuously implemented essential programs on environment protection, community development, and safety and health, despite the pandemic and expended a whopping **P66.5 Million pesos** for AEPEP and **P36.2 Million pesos** for SDMP in 2020.

“With strict enforcement of preventive measures against COVID-19 to protect employees and our host communities, we did not have work stoppage with no recorded-case of infection within the mine site, and, most significantly, we did not lay-off any worker” shares Engr. Cynthia E. Rosero, RTN’s Resident Mine Manager.

According to Environmental Planner, Janice M. Tupas, Manager of the Mines Environmental Protection and Enhancement Dept. (MEPED) of RTN, the PMIEA scoring is 50% environmental management; 20% safety and health; 20% implementation of SDMP; and 10% for information and education campaign or IEC.

“The qualifiers or applicants for the PMIEA must achieve a final rating of more than 95%. There are significant points also for ‘no unresolved notice of violations’; ‘compliance to operational and legal obligations’, and ‘no fatal work-related accidents’,” Tupas explains.

Executive Order 399 issued in 1997, which established the PMIEA, states that the award is to recognize “outstanding levels of dedication, initiative, and innovation in various aspects of operations in the country’s minerals sector.”



DOST-FPRDI champions earth-friendly technologies

By DOST-FPRDI Published on March 7, 2021



DOST-FPRDI's studies on tree plantation species promotes the establishment of tree farms and the use of products harvested from them. Properly harvested and processed, wood products help limit the effects of global warming as they are known to be effective carbon absorbers. They can help trap excessive carbon from the atmosphere which is a major cause of climate change.

QUEZON CITY, Mar. 7 -- The Department of Science and Technology's Forest Products Research and Development Institute (DOST-FPRDI) has, from the start, been promoting sustainable and earth-friendly forest products technologies.

The DOST-FPRDI conducts studies on premium timber that aims to support the needs of the forest-using industries and it also began in the 1980s to study other related natural products. As the country's wood supply began to dwindle due to reckless logging, the agency had to look for substitute raw materials for its clients in the housing, pulp and paper, handicrafts and furniture sectors.

Substitute raw materials

For the past decades, DOST-FPRDI researchers have probed all kinds of possible replacement to forest timber. These include bamboo; industrial tree plantation species (ITPS); senile coconut wood and rubber wood; abaca; and agricultural residues such as coconut coir, tobacco stalks, tea leaves, corn stalk and rice straw. They have also studied fiber plants, dye plants, forest woody vines, as well as tree gums, resins, oils and exudates, among others.

"Because of our name, our work has sometimes been misunderstood by the public, and even by policy makers," says Director Romulo T. Aggangan of DOST-FPRDI. "During Senate Budget Hearings, some lawmakers would ask about the relevance of what we do, considering that the country has very little forest cover left, and these have already been made off-limits to all kinds of logging. We then have to explain to them what we do and what we have done so far."

Processing technology for forest timber

Over the years, DOST-FPRDI wood anatomists, chemists, and forest products engineers have studied the properties and uses of 15 kinds of industrial tree plantation species (ITPS), such as falcata and gmelina. Because of this, many managers in the wood-based industries now understand how to saw, machine, dry, finish, and treat these non-forest raw materials. Fast-cycle trees grown in plantations are good substitutes to forest timber for construction and many other industrial uses.

Another contribution is the furnace-type lumber dryer (FTLD). "This is like a big oven which can dry natural raw materials fast and right, resulting in quality wooden furniture which don't shrink or crack, and handicrafts that are not attacked by molds," Aggangan explains.



In 2018, Connor Group, one of the world's top merchandise-sourcing firms hailed the Institute for its role in raising the quality of Philippine handicraft exports using the FTLD.

"Another helpful technology is the low-cost wood moisture meter which helps our clients know how much water a piece of wood contains. This is important to ensure the quality of the finished product," says Aggangan.

Recent accomplishments

In recent years, the Institute has trained countless aspiring business people on handmade papermaking, innovated wine barrels from tree plantation species, and developed machines for making engineered bamboo that is one of the promising housing materials in the country today. It has also set up a state-of-the-art processing plant for converting old and unproductive rubberwood into quality furniture that is now a big help to rubber farmers in Zamboanga Sibugay.

At present, DOST-FPRDI is studying how to optimize the abaca fiber for making high-end industrial products, how to upgrade bamboo musical instruments, how to make the most of forest woody vines as handicraft raw materials, and how to develop fragrances and flavors from forest products, among others.

DOST-FPRDI, likewise, runs world class testing laboratories for furniture, plywood, pulp and paper, and also conducts wood identification, physical and mechanical properties, and biomass energy tests on forest-based and related products.

Pro-environment

"Come to think of it, our name is a misnomer," says Aggangan. "It doesn't exactly reflect who we are, because we do so much more than study forest products. We do not study forest timber anymore, but instead we look for ways to wisely use many native plants and related natural materials to meet our clients' needs. Much of what we do show our aim to help protect – and not destroy – the planet."

For example, he explains, in its bamboo projects, the Institute supports the bamboo-based industry and promotes bamboo farming. Putting up more plantations worldwide can also help stabilize the earth's climate by limiting the effects of global warming. More than any other plant, bamboo can absorb massive amounts of carbon from the atmosphere which is a major cause of global warming.

"The same is true with tree plantation species," he adds. "As we do more studies on them, we promote the setting up of more tree farms and the use of products harvested from them, which are known to be effective carbon absorbers."

In their current projects, Aggangan adds that DOST-FPRDI researchers are looking for more earth-friendly ways of doing things – for example, more energy-efficient sawmilling, drying and machining methods, and less toxic methods of preserving wood.

"In the coming years, we will continue to work towards the competitiveness of our client industries while promoting sustainability. These two things – competitiveness and sustainability – should always go together. No matter how fantastic, scientific innovations will mean nothing if they damage the environment," concludes Aggangan. (RKAral, DOST-FPRDI)



PH looks into carbon tax to fight climate change

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:04 AM March 01, 2021

The Philippines is looking into carbon pricing and taxation to slap a price on harmful emissions in line with the country's push to fight climate change.

"We recognize that there is a need to put in place measures to reduce carbon emissions while balancing the short-term versus long-term economic objectives and environmental goals," director Nina Asuncion of the Department of Finance (DOF) told a webinar organized by the Tokyo-based think tank Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) last week.

Citing a partnership for market readiness study by the World Bank, Asuncion said the most effective and efficient emissions trading scheme for the Philippines would be in the power sector.

On the other hand, carbon pricing instruments covering transport are deemed "less effective given the sector has less share in the Philippines' total greenhouse gas emissions and an inelastic demand."

Asuncion said the DOF was carefully studying carbon taxes "to ensure that there's no regressivity within the system."

In lieu of carbon tax, the Philippines is focusing on implementing carbon pricing instruments, taking into consideration political feasibility; the mechanism's impact on retail prices, which should be minimized, and congressional approval of carbon pricing legislation, Asuncion said.

Also, "the carbon pricing instrument mechanism to be adopted must trigger clean energy investments so that a direct benefit can be seen by consumers," she added.

—Ben O. de Vera INQ



Climate change risk mitigation good for fiscal metrics

March 8, 2021 | 12:31 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

By **Luz Wendy T. Noble**, *Reporter*

RESPONDING to climate change risks will benefit the Philippines in terms of debt servicing, as well as boost its credit rating, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) official said.

“Joining the global effort to tackle the climate crisis will not only help protect the planet, but can also help strengthen public finances in the Philippines,” IMF Representative to the Philippines Yongzheng Yang said in an e-mail to *BusinessWorld*.

Although the Philippines entered the crisis with a “favorable” debt position due to its macroeconomic policies in the past, Mr. Yang noted the country’s debt level will inevitably rise along with other economies due to the pandemic.

An IMF paper published by economists Serhan Cevik and Joao Tovar Jalles found that countries that are less resilient to climate change risk may have to incur higher cost of government borrowing. It showed that an increase of 10 percentage points in climate change vulnerability is associated with an over 150 basis points increase in long-term government bond spreads of emerging markets and developing economies.

“These results highlight the importance of improving resilience to climate change in managing public debt sustainability, especially for emerging markets and developing economies,” Mr. Yang said.

In its 2019 Article IV Consultation and Staff Report for the Philippines, the IMF said the country faces “significant” risks from its standing as one of the most vulnerable to climate change.

While it noted the Philippines has taken some steps to combat climate change, the IMF said more can be done through the allocation of more resources and initiatives for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Boosting resilience against climate change could also help the country battle against a rise in poverty incidence, it added.

The World Bank estimated an average of P177 billion is lost in public and private assets due to typhoons and earthquakes in the Philippines every year.



Climate change risks are also considered by debt watchers in assigning credit ratings.

In a report released last Friday, S&P Global Ratings said their economic assessment on sovereigns include potential adjustment for volatility in economic output that could be caused by constant exposures to natural disasters or adverse weather conditions.

“Environmental risks are embedded in our assessment on the Philippines’ creditworthiness. Natural disasters may have an impact on a government’s fiscal position, especially where significant aid is distributed to hard-hit regions, and revenues are adversely impacted,” S&P analyst Andrew Wood said in an e-mail to *BusinessWorld*.

S&P in May 2020 affirmed its BBB+ long-term credit rating for the country, citing expectations for recovery in 2021 following the crisis caused by the pandemic. It expects the economy to grow by 9.6% this year following a record 9.5% contraction in 2020.

“The government has in the past maintained modest fiscal deficits, even in years where the Philippines suffered damaging weather events,” Mr. Wood said.

The country’s budget deficit in 2020 stood at P1.371 trillion, equivalent to about 7.63% of the gross domestic product. This is more than double the P660-billion gap in 2019 which is about 3.38% of the country’s economic output.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III, who is also the chairperson of the Climate Change Commission, has said the government’s recovery programs should be tailor-fitted to attract investments in domestic renewable energy, sustainable urban planning, and climate-smart agriculture.



Davao City council passes law vs single-use plastic



Photo courtesy of Idis

[RALPH LAWRENCE G. LLEMIT](#)

March 07, 2021

A COALITION of environmental groups lauded the passage of the ordinance in Davao City banning the use of single use plastic, but they are pushing for amendments after some provisions were not covered.

In a position paper filed by the Sustainable Davao Movement (SDM) to the 19th City Council, the group lauded the passage of an ordinance regulating the sale, distribution, and use of single-use plastics in the city, known as the "No to Single-Use Plastics Ordinance of 2021." The ordinance was passed on third and final reading on Tuesday, March 2.

Councilor Diosdado Mahipus Jr., committee on environment chairperson and author of the ordinance, said in the ordinance that it aims to regulate the sale, distribution, and use of single-use plastics and to encourage the use of reusable products by discouraging disposable plastic products.

The ordinance also aims to implement waste reduction plans, programs, and practices within the city and "to enhance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature."

It also stated that single-use plastics such as drinking cups, ice cream cups, condiments or gravy containers, cup lids, stirrers, cutleries, straws, meal boxes, pastry or cake boxes, egg containers or clamshells, balloon sticks, and hand gloves are no longer allowed to be sold, used, or distributed for free without a special permit to distribute and/or use single-use plastic products.

"Special permit to sell" will be issued by the City Mayor's Office and upon showing that there are no commercially available alternatives.

The SDM, a network of environmental multi-sectoral organizations, women and youth groups, and individuals who promote and advocate for sustainable living in the city, lauded the passage of the ordinance, which is now waiting for the signature of Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio for its effectiveness.

"As residents and ecowaste practitioners of Davao City, we have been monitoring and calling for the regulation on single-use plastics since 2019. While we appreciate and commend that the City Council has decided to move forward with the single-use plastics ordinance, we also raise our concerns on the ordinance," SDM said in a position paper forwarded to the media.

The group raised concern about the ordinance's title "regulating the sale, distribution, and use of single-use plastics" in the city. It also proposed to rename the ordinance from "No Plastics Ordinance" to "Plastics-free ordinance."

"Consider using 'free' to emphasize that it is the dependence on single-use plastics that we are addressing such that existing alternatives will be the mainstream product/packaging," SDM said.



The group called for the inclusion of sando bags, labo bags, and PET bottles in the single-use plastics to be banned or regulated.

SDM is also calling on to amend the special permit. It said the P10,000 per year permit fee is "too inconsequential to deter single-use plastic production." Instead, it suggested the permit be on a per-item basis.

The group also pushed for the inclusion of incentives for establishments and institutions that will transition to plastics-free operations and declare their own single-use plastic-free policy. Incentives include waiving of fees related to registration/permit fees and promotion of the enterprise in social media and other promotional materials/events of the city.

Some of the amendments it is pushing are the inclusion of persons with disability (PWD) in the Special Usage Distribution and exceptions, the formation of MMT (multi-stakeholder monitoring team) or a Task Force on monitoring, the creation of a Sustainable Enterprise Fund to be created that will give seed money or supplemental capital support for enterprises that support sustainable alternatives to plastic products and/or packaging, and the mandatory submission of Plastics Management Plan to producers or distributors of items that are not covered by the prohibition on use.

"Many of these suggestions were brought up during the consultations/committee hearings in 2019 but were not captured in the present version/proposed ordinance," SDM said.

"The ordinance may not be what we expected it to be, nonetheless, this is a step closer to addressing the plastic wastes issue in the City. We just hope that this ordinance will stir behavioral and attitude change to Dabawenyos and, also, for the business sectors to also do their part in impacting that change," Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability (Idis) Executive Director Mark Peñalver said.

Idis is one of the members of SDM, who also lobbied for the inclusion of sando bags, labo bags, and PET bottles in the single-use plastics regulated items.

He said their group is also looking forward to helping in drafting the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the ordinance and will monitor closely the implementation of this ordinance.

"Our campaign for a plastic-free Davao does not end in the passage of the ordinance. As policy advocacy and environmental non-government organization, we have to ensure that the IRR and the implementation of the Ordinance remain loyal to its intent," Peñalver added.

SunStar Davao is still reaching out to Mahipus and the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their side on this matter.



‘No trees, no marriage license’ pushed in Cebu City

By [Mary Ruth R. Malinao](#)(The Freeman) - March 7, 2021 - 12:00am



The proposed ordinance entitled “No Trees, No License Ordinance” is now pending before the committee on laws, ordinances and styling, and the committee on health for review.

CEBU, Philippines — Cebu City Councilor Nestor Archival has proposed an ordinance requiring marriage license applicants to plant two trees.

The proposed ordinance entitled “No Trees, No License Ordinance” is now pending before the committee on laws, ordinances and styling, and the committee on health for review.

“The increasing number of offspring produced every year is one of the reasons why trees should be preserved and protected because aside from trees being used to build family homes, the number of people who need the oxygen produced by these trees is increasing,” read the proposed measure.

Archival said the measure is timely in support of the campaign of the Cebu City government to plant three million trees within three years to promote the protection and preservation of the environment.

Requiring applicants to plant at least two trees, fruit-bearing or not, before the marriage license is issued is an additional requirement set forth in Executive Order No. 209, series of 1987, or otherwise known as The Family Code of the Philippines, and other existing laws and local ordinances.

The barangay chairman shall issue a certification, stating that the concerned applicants for a marriage license have complied or have successfully planted trees as a condition sine qua non for its issuance.

The Office of the City Agriculture shall be tasked to provide seedlings to the applicants.

The certification issued by the barangay, together with the other requirements, shall be attached to the application which will be submitted to the Local Civil Registrar.

In accordance with the duties and responsibilities enumerated in EO No. 209, the LCR shall issue the marriage license upon finding that the applicants have complied with all requirements of the law including such proposed ordinance, once approved.

The proposed ordinance states that failure to comply with the additional requirement shall result in a denial or non-issuance of a marriage license. — **GMR (FREEMAN)**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/cebu-news/2021/03/07/2082630/no-trees-no-marriage-license-pushed-cebu-city/amp/>



Million-trees foundation boosts watershed rehab

posted March 07, 2021 at 11:10 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

A private sector group has created the Million Trees Foundation to perpetuate and sustain the annual million trees challenge (AMTC), a five-year project seeking the rehabilitation of seven critical watersheds.

With the MTF formed and incorporated with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the continuity of the project is now assured, according to MWSS Chairman of the Board Reynaldo V. Velasco.

AMTC is an original creation of the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System—Corporate Office under Velasco, then the MWSS Administrator in February 2017.



MTFI logo conjures a refreshing image of greenery.

The MWSS chairman hailed the formal establishment of the foundation as a noble effort to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the AMTC,

The administration's project will benefit seven critical watersheds namely: Angat, Ipo, Kaliwa, La Mesa, Laguna Lake, Umiray, and Upper Marikina including Manila Bay through the planting of one million trees yearly. The AMTC was in response to President Rodrigo R. Duterte's socio-economic development agenda, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022. The AMTC program corresponds with the PDP focus areas on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem system resilience through partnerships in rehabilitating critical watersheds and convergence/complementation of resources.

Since its launch in 2017 until end of December 2020, a total of 4,021,626 seedlings were planted in the watersheds through the AMTC. Through the AMTC a total of 9,509.375 hectares from 2017 to 2020 were reforested. At the Ipo-Angat watershed, reforested area was 5,035.19 hectares; La Mesa, 1,723.39; Laguna de Bay, 347.83; Kaliwa-Umiray, 150.84; Upper Marikina, 1,928.99; and Manila Bay, 323.135.

Serving as Million Trees Foundation, Inc. President and Executive Director is veteran author and publisher Melandrew T. Velasco, an advocate for tree-planting who conceptualized the noble AMTC project for MWSS and was subsequently duly carried out by the MWSS.

He served as publisher and editor of the Water & Environment Journal with the Philippine Water Works Association (PWWA), the umbrella organization of the country's water supply industry, for over two decades. He is also an active member of JCI Senate Philippines and the Rotary International District 3780, two partner organizations of the AMTC project.

"We look forward to gain the support of DepEd, DENR, San Miguel Corporation, MVP group of companies, Wawa JV and other corporations to grow more narra trees," Foundation Executive Director Melandrew Velasco said.

The Million Trees Foundation aims to preserve and restore the ecosystem functions of watersheds nationwide aside from the watershed beneficiaries of AMTC. The River Basin Control Office of DENR has identified 142 critical watersheds in the Philippines. The rehabilitation of the watersheds will be patterned after the La Mesa dam rehabilitation project. Its objectives also include the conduct of tree-planting activities; awareness campaign in support of the government's reforestation program and CSR environment projects of private corporations; establishment of a data bank on statistics relevant to the foundation's activities; and introduction of automation and modern-technology in tree-planting.

These objectives are to be pursued in partnership with the private sector, educational institutions people's organizations, and government agencies to ensure nurturing of saplings and provide livelihood to residents of areas covered by the tree-planting activities.

The Foundation will also network with international foundations and entities focused on watershed management and planting of trees.



Inspired by success stories in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, it will utilize drones for tree-planting specially in Rizal/Wawa watershed to fast-track the achievement of tree-planting targets.

Million Trees Foundation is pushing for the planting of bamboos along river banks; narra (*Pterocarpus indicus*) and ylang-ylang (*Cananga odorata*) trees in the other areas.

It will also push for the massive planting of bamboos along riverbanks in Marikina and Laguna Lake. Bamboos absorb excess water, help cut soil losses, and minimize soil erosion. Planting bamboos along Marikina riverbanks supports reforestation projects that cover 600 hectares by Fr. Benigno Beltran's Mga Anak ni Inang Daigdig group.

According to Velasco, the Foundation is also pushing for the propagation of ylang-ylang through the tree-planting activities. The ylang-ylang flower is source of essential oil used in soaps, shampoos, body oils, and perfume. He shared that in the 1800s, the country was a major supplier of essential oil for France and other perfume manufacturing countries. He cited Lingayen Mayor Leopoldo Bataoil as a true advocate of the benefits of the ylang-ylang tree.

The Foundation is not only concerned with tree-planting, reforestation and environmental sustainability. "We want to provide livelihood opportunities to people particular those in the communities through our tree-planting advocacy," Velasco said.

These livelihood projects include putting up a nursery for saplings to be planted in target areas, engaging local settlers to take care of the nursery and planted areas, developing wood carving home industries, and organizing small/marginalized farmers to be suppliers of ylang-ylang flowers to manufacturers, among others.



Medical workers of Cardinal Santos in San Juan City get vaccinated with CoronaVac on March 5, 2021.

The STAR/Michael Varcas

DOH records over 3,000 coronavirus cases for third consecutive day

(Philstar.com) - March 7, 2021 - 4:00pm

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Health reported 3,276 new cases of the coronavirus disease 2019 on Sunday, March 7, bringing the number of total cases to 594,412.

Of the total caseload, 36,043 or 6.1% are still classified as active cases, or patients who have neither passed away nor recovered and are still in hospitals and quarantine facilities.

The department in its latest case bulletin also reported 51 new deaths, bringing the total death toll to 12,516 or 2.1% of total cases.

Exactly 545,853 have now so far recovered after the DOH added 10,516 more recoveries, good for a 91.8% recovery rate.

One sample found with South African variant

Earlier Sunday, the Department of Health also reported that the Philippine Genome Center had found that one of 30 anonymized samples from the Philippine General Hospital was found to have traces of the South African coronavirus variant.

"High-risk exposures to recently reported infected staff have already been identified, quarantined, and tested. Second and third-generation contact tracing continues. Improvements are underway," the DOH also said in a statement sent to reporters.

"A large volume of testing is expected to continue as more staff are encouraged to have RT-PCR test for the COVID-19 virus. We are doing all of these measures to prevent more COVID-19 infections and protect our staff as well as our patients," the department also said.

On Saturday, the DOH claimed that there is still not enough evidence to conclude that there is local transmission of the highly contagious coronavirus variant first identified in South Africa even after it logged 52 new cases of it the day before.

That same day, the Philippines logged over 3,000 coronavirus cases for the second day in a row.



Saturday's 3,439 new cases also marked the highest daily rise since October 2020.

What's new today?

- The Metro Manila Development Authority [said it would review its existing quarantine protocols](#) as the 12-day spike in cases inundated quarantine facilities to 89% capacity yesterday.
- Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said that the next two weeks would be "crucial" in determining if the country is able to manage the rising cases.
- Globally, over 117 million coronavirus cases have been recorded, leading to more than 2.5 million deaths around the world.
- It has been 355 days since the first enhanced community quarantine was hoisted. The Philippines is still under the world's longest quarantine.

— **Franco Luna**



13M Moderna vaccine doses to arrive by Q3

By Lade Jean Kabagani March 7, 2021, 4:28 pm



NEW SUPPLIES. A total of 13 million doses of the Moderna vaccines will arrive by the third quarter, National Task Force against Covid-19 chief implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. confirmed on Sunday (March 7, 2021). The World Health Organization said the US-manufactured jabs have shown an efficacy of approximately 92 percent against Covid-19. (Photo courtesy of Anadolu)

MANILA – Moderna, Inc. announced on Sunday it has signed a supply agreement with the Philippines for 13 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine that will arrive by the third quarter of this year.

The Philippine government and private sector are also working out a deal for an additional 7 million doses.

“We thank the government and the private sector for their collaboration to bring the Covid-19 Vaccine Moderna to the Philippines,” Stéphane Bancel, chief executive officer of Moderna, said in a statement.

“We appreciate the confidence in Moderna and our mRNA platform demonstrated by the Government of the Philippines. We remain committed to making our vaccine available on every continent to help end this global pandemic.”

National Task Force Against Covid-19 chief implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. also said in an interview on Sunday that the government is waiting for the final draft of the multilateral supply agreement with Moderna.

"Kasi dalawa po ang agreement natin with Moderna. 'Yung bilateral agreement na 13 million at saka yung 7 million (We are finalizing two agreements with Moderna firm. One is the bilateral agreement for the 13 million doses and the other one is 7 million doses) for the tripartite or multilateral agreement," he said.

Under the deal, the government is expecting the delivery of the Moderna vaccines by the third quarter of the year.

On Sunday night, 38,400 doses of the AstraZeneca jabs will arrive after the initial delivery of 487,200.

Sinovac, following a donation of 600,000 doses, will have 1.4 million more to be delivered on March 21. Of the total, 400,000 doses were donated by China.

"Sa ngayon po ang ating Emergency Use Authorization na nakabinbin pa lang po ngayon is yung sa Bharat atsaka po yung sa Gamaleya. 'Yung others, they are already submitting in, nagkakaroon ng tinatawag natin na parallel negotiation (So far, only the Bharat and Gamaleya companies have pending applications for EUA. The others are already submitting their applications, while the parallel negotiation is ongoing)," he said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization has issued interim recommendations for use of the Moderna mRNA-1273 vaccine against Covid-19 for those aged 18 years and older.

The Moderna vaccine has been shown to have an efficacy of approximately 92 percent against Covid-19, starting from 14 days after the first dose, according to WHO.

“Based on the evidence so far, the new variants of SARS-CoV-2, including the B.1.1.7 and the 501Y.V2, do not alter the effectiveness of the Moderna mRNA vaccine,” the WHO posted on its website. (PNA)

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1132853>



A barangay official screens a motorcycle rider seeking to enter Barangay 183 in Pasay City at past midnight yesterday. Sixty-three barangays in Pasay are still under localized enhanced community quarantine, from 83 barangays last week, because of a surge in COVID cases.

Jesse Bustos

Government tightens enforcement of health protocols

[Alexis Romero](#) (The Philippine Star) - March 8, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The government is tightening the enforcement of health protocols to arrest a resurgence of COVID-19 infections, including those caused by the more contagious South African and Brazilian variants, Malacañang said yesterday.

“We really have to be stricter when it comes to the law enforcement side,” Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles told radio station dzBB in Filipino, as he explained the need for the police, local governments and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to step up efforts to contain the virus.

With the COVID-19 caseload well over 591,000, the country recorded 3,439 new infections last Saturday – the biggest one-day tally of new cases in five months, the Department of Health (DOH) said.

“We can see that the PNP (Philippine National Police) is stricter in implementing and enforcing protocols. They are really accosting (violators),” said Nograles.

“We’re also looking to the MMDA in terms of enforcement here in Metro Manila. There is a need really to accost and remind people who are not following (protocols) and those who are stubborn. They know what to do,” he added.

Nograles, who co-chairs the task force combating the pandemic, said mayors and governors have the authority to impose measures that would stem the increase of infections in their respective areas.

While some sectors attributed the spike in COVID-19 cases to the easing up of community quarantines in order to reopen the economy, the Cabinet secretary said local governments may impose granular lockdowns in areas with alarming rates of infection.

“The local government units (LGUs) are there, they are on the ground and they can provide a quick assessment and action. It is within their power to make adjustments, policies, or decisions,” he said.

Nograles said the situation in areas of concern like Pasay City would be considered when the government decides on the quarantine classifications for April.

“We are monitoring the spike in infections in Pasay City and other areas in Metro Manila. We have to do the genome sequencing especially in Metro Manila so we can detect the variants we are monitoring like the South African and UK variant,” he said.



“We will monitor the cases for the entire month of March and obviously, it would be our basis for making recommendations for April,” he said.

Nograles reminded the public that while the new COVID-19 variants are more contagious, the manner of transmission is the same; so everyone should continue to wash their hands frequently, wear face masks and observe physical distancing.

Earlier, President Duterte said he would loosen pandemic-related restrictions nationwide if the government maintains a stockpile of at least two million vaccine doses.

But yesterday, Nograles clarified: “While the vaccines have arrived, it does not mean we can stop complying with the health protocols.”

In a related development, the Presidential Security Group (PSG) is implementing stricter measures to secure the Chief Executive from health risks, especially since he has not yet been inoculated against COVID-19.

Nograles said that while the 75-year-old Duterte has been very visible to the public recently, the PSG has been limiting the number of people who can approach him.

“We can see that they (PSG) are very strict. They screen the people who can go near (the President),” he said.

‘Enforcers exhausted’

The challenge to law enforcers, though, to sustain the drive against health protocol violators is starting to be “exhausting,” according to the officer-in-charge of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

“On March 16, we’re marking our first year. March 16 last year was when the lockdown in Luzon was declared. It’s like people are already exhausted, including the law enforcers,” DILG Undersecretary Bernardo Florece told dzBB in Filipino.

On this pretext, Florece said LGUs should impose and enhance their respective ordinances with corresponding penalties for violation of health protocols.

“If LGUs have existing ordinance, they should enhance it. Some have ordinances, but no penalties on violators,” he said.

He said the DILG is set to release a new memorandum circular that standardizes ordinances for cities and municipalities for health protocol violations in a bid to curb the rising trend in new COVID-19 cases.

Also, the DILG would issue an advisory on more lenient protocols for local travel so as to clarify the new guideline given by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF).

DTI steps up monitoring

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it would contribute to the effort to arrest the rise in infections by stepping up its campaign for strict compliance to health protocols by business establishments.

“[We] will also increase further workplace monitoring and enforcement,” Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said in a Viber message to reporters.



He acknowledged the need for better compliance to health protocols in communities and public markets and boost contact tracing and testing efforts.

But the DTI maintained its position against the implementation of a wide-scale lockdown because the economy needs to recover.

Lopez said there is no need to withdraw the recent go-signal given to reopen some sectors. "It's not due to the newly opened sectors because we haven't implemented yet," he said.

Instead, the DTI chief pointed out that citizens could do better in avoiding private gatherings in their homes to lessen the risk of transmitting the virus. "Feedback from the ground, new cases coming mostly from household," he said.

The DTI recently issued Memorandum Circular 21-08 which recategorized sectors to Category III from Category IV and allow reopening in areas under general community quarantine (GCQ).

Under the MC which took effect last Friday, cinemas are allowed to operate at a maximum of 25 percent capacity in GCQ areas and 50 percent in those under modified GCQ (MGCQ), but would have to comply with health and safety protocols and additional guidelines from the DOH and

LGUs.

Mall operators however, deferred the reopening of cinemas, opting to wait for guidelines from LGUs.

Apart from traditional cinemas, the MC also covered driving schools; video and interactive game arcades; libraries, archives, museums, and cultural centers; tourist attractions like parks, theme parks, natural sites and historical landmarks; and meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions.

Areas under GCQ for this month are Metro Manila, Apayao, Baguio City, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Batangas, Tacloban City, Iligan City, Davao City and Lanao del Sur.

The rest of the country is under the more relaxed modified GCQ. – **Romina Cabrera, Louella Desiderio**



Space-starved Singapore builds floating solar farms in climate fight

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 01:47 PM March 07, 2021



This photograph taken on February 3, 2021 shows a worker fixing a floater onto a solar panel as part of the construction of a floating solar power farm on Tengeh reservoir in Singapore. Thousands of panels glinting in the sun stretch into the sea off Singapore, part of the land-scarce city-state's push to build floating solar farms to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Photo by Roslan RAHMAN / AFP

SINGAPORE — Thousands of panels glinting in the sun stretch into the sea off Singapore, part of the land-scarce city-state's push to build floating solar farms to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

It may be one of the world's smallest countries, but the prosperous financial hub is among the biggest per capita carbon dioxide emitters in Asia.

And while authorities have been pushing to change that, renewable energy is a challenge in a country with no rivers for hydro-electricity and where the wind is not strong enough to power turbines.

So the tropical country turned to solar power — however, with little land space in a place half the size of Los Angeles, it has resorted to setting up energy plants off its coasts and on reservoirs.

“After exhausting the rooftops and the available land, which is very scarce, the next big potential is actually our water area,” said Jen Tan, senior vice president and head of solar in Southeast Asia at conglomerate Sembcorp Industries, which is building a project.

An island-state threatened by rising sea levels because of climate change, Singapore is aware of the urgency of cutting emissions, although critics say authorities' environmental commitments have thus far fallen short.

The government last month unveiled a wide-ranging “green plan” that included steps such as planting more trees, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills and building more charging points to encourage the use of electric cars.

Among the measures is increasing solar energy use four-fold to around two percent of the nation's power needs by 2025, and to three percent by 2030 — enough for 350,000 households per year.

As well as on water, solar power plants have already been built on rooftops and on the ground.

‘New frontier’

One newly built solar farm spreads out from the coast into the Johor Strait, which separates Singapore from Malaysia.

The 13,000 panels are anchored to the seabed and can produce five megawatts of electricity, enough to power 1,400 flats for an entire year.



“The sea is a new frontier for solar to be installed,” said Shawn Tan, vice president for engineering at Singaporean firm Sunseap Group, which completed the project in January.

“We hope that this will set a precedent to have more floating projects in the sea in Singapore and neighboring countries.”

Under development at Tengeh Reservoir is a far bigger project — once completed later this year, the 122,000-panel solar farm will be one of the biggest in Southeast Asia covering an area the size of 45 football pitches.

The project, developed by Sembcorp and the national water agency Public Utilities Board, will generate enough power to meet the energy needs of Singapore’s water treatment plants, said the agency’s senior planner Sharon Zheng.

This will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions equivalent to removing 7,000 cars from the roads.

The solar panels are imported from China, the world’s largest manufacturer of the technology, and anchored to the floor of the reservoir with blocks of concrete.

‘Insufficient’ targets

But the maritime hub could even face some space constraints when it comes to floating solar, said Subhod Mhaisalkar, executive director of the Energy Research Institute at the city-state’s Nanyang Technological University.

“Do you use the ocean waters for deploying solar, or do you use it for shipping?” he told AFP.

And despite the push for green power, the city-state will struggle to wean itself off a reliance on climate-damaging natural gas, and to cut emissions without impacting its refining and petrochemical sectors.

In addition, projects such as floating solar farms are not enough unless backed up with a greater official commitment to cut emissions, said Red Constantino, executive director of the Philippines-based Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities.

Singapore has pledged to halve its 2030 peak greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and achieve net zero emissions “as soon as viable” in the second half of the century.

But this is behind other developed economies, and the Climate Action Tracker, which tracks governments’ commitments, has classified its targets as “highly insufficient”.

Singapore is not doing its “fair share”, Constantino told AFP, adding the solar farms risked becoming “mere bling” unless the government moved faster.

“They need to set a higher absolute target. Such a target sends a signal to the very business community by which Singapore’s economy thrives.”

Singapore builds floating solar farms in climate fight

By Agence France-Presse

March 8, 2021

Thousands of panels glinting in the sun stretch into the sea off Singapore, part of the land-scarce city-state's push to build floating solar farms to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

It may be one of the world's smallest countries, but the prosperous financial hub is among the biggest per capita carbon dioxide emitters in Asia.

And while authorities have been pushing to change that, renewable energy is a challenge in a country with no rivers for hydro-electricity and where the wind is not strong enough to power turbines.



NEW FRONTIER This photograph taken on Feb. 3, 2021 shows workers assembling solar panels on the shore of the Tengoh reservoir as part of the construction of a floating solar power farm in Singapore. AFP PHOTO

So, the tropical country turned to solar power — however, with little land space in a place half the size of Los Angeles, it has resorted to setting up energy plants off its coasts and on reservoirs.

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