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DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR to continue rehab of Manila Bay amid flak

Saturday, October 17, 2020 Cory Martinez

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy Cimatu has assured Chief Justice Diosdado Peralta and five other Supreme Court justices that they will not buckle down with their rehabilitation efforts in Manila Bay despite criticisms from several sectors, particularly on the beach nourishment project. Cimatu made the assurance during his recent meeting with Peralta and five other justices wherein he reported the ongoing efforts to rehabilitate the historic Manila Bay.

Cimatu told the justices that the DENR had always been “transparent” about the undertaking, which enjoys tremendous support from the public.

“Are we bothered? Certainly not. As long as we are performing our duties right, we need not bothered,” Cimatu said.

“For now, we will continue our battle for Manila Bay. With collective efforts, tasks are done with relative ease,” Cimatu added.

Also during the meeting, Cimatu expressed his gratitude for the chance given to him to present to the justices the fruits of their commitment and continuous collaboration with the mandamus agencies and other institutions.

In 2008, the SC issued a writ of continuing mandamus directing the DENR and 12 other agencies to restore Manila Bay’s water quality to a level fit for swimming and bathing.

“We are honored to be given the chance to showcase what we have done so far and to present what we have planned to do more for the bay,” he added.

Cimatu said the “long overdue” rehabilitation of Manila Bay gained momentum last year when no less than President Rodrigo Roa Duterte gave a tall order to clean up the historic water body as he formed the Manila Bay Task Force led by the DENR.

As a strategy, Cimatu said the government is not just cleaning up the bay, but the sources of trash upstream. “The cleanup is a continuing and sustained activity where the communities and local government units are made integral part of the efforts.”

The DENR chief said the cleanup is coupled with culture and behavior change communication interventions.

“This is because we firmly believe that reforming attitudes and behavior towards responsible environmental citizenship and institutionalizing cultural reforms are the key ingredients in making the rehabilitation successful,” Cimatu said.

Despite the limited movements and restrictions due to COVID-19, Cimatu said the government was still able to accomplish much to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

“In a nutshell, our accomplishments include, among others, employing geo-engineering solutions, beach nourishment project, dredging and desilting activities, and construction of sewage treatment plant (STP),” Cimatu said.

“In the days to come, we will see the completion of the construction of a circumferential sewage interceptor and communal septic tank specifically for the BASECO area,” he added.



For his part, Peralta praised the DENR and other mandamus agencies for their “diligence” and “determination” to comply with the 12-year-old directive.

“Hindi lang sila (mandamus agencies) sumusunod, sumusunod nang husto. Nakita naman namin na maayos ang ginagawa,” the Chief Justice said.

Following the meeting, Cimatú toured the magistrates at the controversial “white sand beach” and other developments along the Baywalk area, the focal point of the Manila Bay rehabilitation project.

In response, Peralta said he was impressed with the outcome of the government’s cleanup efforts, particularly with the low coliform level of wastewater coming out of the STP located along Roxas Boulevard.

After passing through the STP, the wastewater from three major drainage outfalls—Padre Faura, Remedios and Estero de San Antonio Abad—is measured at 49 most probable number per 100 milliliters, which is below the required 200 mpn/100ml for Class SB waters, considered the safe level for swimming.

Peralta was joined by Associate Justices Rodil Zalameda, Mario Lopez, Ramon Paul Hernando, Edgardo de los Santos and Ricardo Rosario.

Also present at the meeting were Court Administrator Midas Marquez, SC Spokesperson and Public Information Office Chief Brian Keith Osaka, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Undersecretary Roberto R. Bernardo and Director Ador Canlas of the DPWH-National Capital Region.



PAGSISIKAP NG DENR SA MANILA BAY REHAB, PINURI NI CHIEF JUSTICE



October 18, 2020 @ 12:11 AM 7 hours ago

NAKIPAGKITA si Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu kay Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta at lima pang justices ng Supreme Court upang ipaliwanag ang mga pagsisikap na ginagawa sa rehabilitasyon ng makasaysayang Manila Bay.

Inilibot din ni Cimatu ang mga mahistrado sa “white sand beach” at iba pang ginagawang pagpapaunlad sa Baywalk area na siyang “focal point” ng Manila Bay rehabilitation project.

Ito ay batay na rin sa 2008 writ of continuing mandamus na inisyu ng Kataas-taasang Hukuman na nag-aatas sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources at 12 pang ahensya ng gobyerno na panumbalikin ang kalidad ng tubig sa Manila Bay sa antas na maaari na itong pagliguan at paglanguyan.

Pinuri ni Peralta ang DENR at ang iba pang mandamus agencies dahil sa sipag at determinasyon ng mga ito na makasunod sa mga nakasaad sa 12 taon na direktiba.

“Hindi lang sila (mandamus agencies) sumusunod, sumusunod nang husto. Nakita naman namin na maayos ang ginagawa,” sabi pa ng Punong Mahistrado.

Bago pa mangyari ang tour, nagkaroon ng meeting ang mga mahistrado sa kalapit na hotel kung saan ang environment chief ay nagbigay ng update sa pagsisikap na linisin ang Manila Bay ng administrasyong Duterte na tinawag na “Battle for Manila Bay.”

“Today, we are pleased to be given the chance to present to you the fruits of our commitment and continuous collaboration with the mandamus agencies and other institutions,” saad ni Cimatu sa kanyang opening remarks.

“We are honored to be given the chance to showcase what we have done so far and to present what we have planned to do more for the bay,” dagdag pa nito.

Ayon kay Cimatu, ang matagal na pagkakatengga ng rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay ay nakakuha ng “momentum” nang ipag-utos ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte na linisin ang makasaysayang look kasabay ng pagbuo ng Manila Bay Task Force na pinamumunuan ng DENR.

Bilang istrategiya, sinabi ni Cimatu na hindi lamang nililinis ng gobyerno ang baybayin kundi maging ang mga upstream na pinanggagalingan ng mga basurang napupunta rito. “The cleanup is a continuing and sustained activity where the communities and local government units are made integral part of the efforts,” aniya.



Sinabi pa ng DENR chief na ang paglilinis ay sinamahan nila ng “culture and behavior change communication interventions.”

“This is because we firmly believe that reforming attitudes and behavior towards responsible environmental citizenship and institutionalizing cultural reforms are the key ingredients in making the rehabilitation successful,” dagdag pa ni Cimatú.

Bagama’t limitado ang mga pagkilos at may mga bawal na ipinatutupad dahil sa COVID-19, sinabi ni Cimatú na malaki pa rin ang nagawa ng gobyerno para sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay.

“In a nutshell, our accomplishments include, among others, employing geo-engineering solutions, beach nourishment project, dredging and desilting activities, and construction of sewage treatment plant,” sabi ni Cimatú.

“In the days to come, we will see the completion of the construction of a circumferential sewage interceptor and communal septic tank specifically for the BASECO area,” dagdag pa nito.

Tiniyak din ng dating Armed Forces chief sa mga mahistrado na hindi naapektuhan ang DENR sa mga sinasabi ng kritiko sa ginagawang rehabilitasyon ng gobyerno partikular na ang tungkol sa beach nourishment project.

Sinabi pa ni Cimatú na palaging “transparent” ang DENR sa mga ginagawa nito, kaya nga natutuwa ang ahensya sa napakaraming suportang ibinibigay ng publiko.

“Are we bothered? Certainly not. As long as we are performing our duties right, we need not be bothered,” malakas na pahayag ni Cimatú.

“For now, we will continue our battle for Manila Bay. With collective efforts, tasks are done with relative ease,” pagtatapos nito.

Bilang tugon, sinabi ni Peralta na napahanga siya sa kinalabasan sa “cleanup efforts” ng gobyerno partikular na ang mababang coliform level ng wastewater na lumalabas sa STP na matatagpuan sa kahabaan ng Roxas Boulevard.

Matapos dumaan sa STP, ang mga wastewater mula sa tatlong “major drainage outfalls” na Padre Faura, Remedios at Estero de San Antonio Abad ay nasukat na mayroong 49 most probable number per 100 milliliters, na mas mababa sa kinakailangang 200 mpn/100ml para sa Class SB waters na maituturing na ligtas para paglanguyan.

Sinamahan si Peralta nina Associate Justices Rodil Zalameda, Mario Lopez, Ramon Paul Hernando, Edgardo delos Santos at Ricardo Rosario.

Kasama rin sa pulong sina Court Administrator Midas Marquez, SC Spokesperson and Public Information Office Chief Brian Keith Osaka, Department of Public Works and Highways Undersecretary Roberto R. Bernardo at Director Ador Canlas ng DPWH-National Capital Region.



DENR Undersecretary for solid waste management and local government unit concerns Benny Antiporda said that he is just helping the DENR achieve its goals, which includes the Manila Bay rehabilitation program.

twitter.com/DENROfficial

DENR exec on calls to resign: Ask Duterte

[Rhodina Villanueva](#), [Janvic Mateo](#) (The Philippine Star) - October 17, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — An official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) yesterday said that despite calls for him to resign, he will just continue doing his job.

DENR Undersecretary for solid waste management and local government unit concerns Benny Antiporda said that he is just helping the DENR achieve its goals, which includes the Manila Bay rehabilitation program.

“Those who want me out can ask the President (Duterte) and Secretary (Roy Cimatu) directly so this can happen. But I’m just doing my job, and my intention here is to serve the people,” he said.

The Geographic Society of the University of the Philippines (UP) said Antiporda is not fit for the job and what the country needs is an official who is “credible, responsive and committed to protecting and managing the environment and natural resources.”

The group was reacting to reports that Antiporda called the UP Marine Science Institute experts “bayaran” or paid hacks after the MSI offered recommendations on how to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

Antiporda has apologized, saying he was carried away by emotions given the numerous criticisms they received concerning the Manila Bay project.

He said the DENR and UP MSI director Laura David are now in talks on the Manila Bay issue.

The P389-million beautification project, which involves covering a 500-meter stretch of the bay’s shoreline with crushed dolomite, has received flak from the public because of its timing and alleged health risks.

‘Prioritize water quality’

Meanwhile, David said while there is nothing wrong with pursuing beautification initiatives, improving water quality should be the priority in the rehabilitation of Manila Bay, given the limited budget.

“You have to prioritize. According to the mandamus, which was agreed upon by a lot of agencies, it has to be water quality first,” she said in Filipino during an interview with “The Chiefs” on OneNews/TV5 on Thursday night.



“So in that sense, the dolomite, it doesn’t contribute to the betterment of the water quality,” she added.

The Supreme Court issued a continuing mandamus in 2008 directing 13 government agencies to clean up Manila Bay.

During an on-site inspection on Wednesday, Chief Justice Diosdado Peralta said he was satisfied with the efforts to clean up the area, noting supposed improvements in water quality in some parts of the bay.

David, however, noted that water quality is still a problem, especially in the portion of Manila Bay along Roxas Boulevard that is still unsafe for swimming.

Microplastics, she added, can even be detected in the water all the way to Corregidor.

“There is a serious need for wastewater management and wastewater treatment plant,” she said when asked what should be prioritized in the Manila Bay rehabilitation.

“When the sewage system of Manila was created, the projection was only four million people. We’re way beyond that,” she added, noting that only 20 percent of the city’s sewage is treated.

David also reiterated their proposal for the creation of different monitoring sites to identify specific interventions in different areas of the bay.



PACC bubusisiin Manila Bay 'white sand'

By Abante News Online — Last updated Oct 17, 2020

NEWS



Sinimulan na ng Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) ang pagsasagawa ng fact-finding inquiry sa Manila Bay rehabilitation project na nagdulot ng pangamba sa environmental and health concerns ng ilang grupo.

Ayon kay PACC Commissioner Greco Belgica, nakipag-coordinate na sila sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) para magsumite ng dokumento kaugnay sa Manila Bay rehabilitation.

"Maraming mga bali-balita diyan na hindi naman nabii-verify pa and sinimulan po namin ang pagtatanong at pag-aalam," ayon kay Belgica sa online press briefing ng Presidential Communications Operations Office-Office of the Global Media and Public Affairs.

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"Pinakukuha namin 'yung

mga dokumento at paliwanag ng mga nag-implement nito DPWH, DENR. Kasi 'yung pera kasi diyan, 'yung project is DENR but implemented by DPWH. So tinitingnan namin lahat 'yan and right now, hindi pa tapos ang aming fact finding," paliwanag ni Belgica.

Titingnan maigi ni Belgica ang implementasyon ng Manila Bay project bago ito isailalim sa formal investigation.

Nabatid na ang cleanup and rehabilitation project ng Manila Bay ay naging usap-usapin dahil sa pagbuhos ng dinurog na dolomite rocks para maging white sand beach subalit natabunan naman ng maitim na buhangin nang bumuhos ang bagyo. (Vicky Aquino)



BORADO IN MANILA



October 18, 2020 @ 12:05 AM 7 hours ago

NAKALULUNGKOT naman ang paglaho ng dolomite na inilagay ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa Manila Bay.

Nag-effort ang kagawaran para mapaganda ang tabing dagat na bahagi ng paglilinis nito na iniutos ng Korte Suprema.

Hindi po biro ang ginugol na pera sa paglilinis at pagpapaganda ng nasabing dalampasigan.

Ang resulta, kaiga-igaya naman talaga.

Sabi ko nga nong makita ko ang mga dinurog na dolomite na siyang tumabon sa maitim at maduming paligid ng dagat, "Wow! Bora in Manila."

Katunayan, pinagkaguluhan ito, marami ang na-excite at dumagsa ang nag-selfie sa Bora in Manila.

Hindi nga mahulugan ng karayom ang lugar noong pansalamantalang buksan ito sa mga mamamayan.

Hindi na naawat ng mga nagbabantay, nawala na ang physical distancing sa sobrang kasabikang makita ang maputing buhangin ng Manila Bay.

Pero, dahil nasa panahon tayo ngayon ng tag-ulan at bagyo, akalain n'yong biglang naglaho ang ilang bahagi ng mga dinurog na dolomite sa gilid ng Manila Bay.

Sabi ng ilan, wala raw palang tibay na maasahan si dolomite.

Mabilis bumitaw ang daling magsawa.

Kaya nga sa mga nag-viral na mga comments, "kapit dolomite", "lumaban ka dolomite, laban!".

Hindi ko po lubos na alam kung ano ang paliwanag ng mga ejsperto roon, kung bakit nawala ang dolomite at sa halip ay natabunan ito ng itim na buhangin.

Sabi ng DENR, hindi naman daw ito naglaho, hindi na "washed-out".

Kundi na "washed in" lang daw.

Naroroon lang ang mga dolomite sa ilalim ng buhangin, natabunan lang daw.



So kung natabunan ito dahil sa malakas na alon, may posibilidad pa ba kaya itong bumalik sa dati o umibabaw sa itim na buhangin?

Sayang naman ang ganda at sayang na sayang naman ang pera.

Naging mainit na usapin ito nitong linggong ito.

May nakapagbitiw ng maanghang na salita dahil sa bugso ng damdamin at may nasaktan sa mga nasabi.

Dumating sa puntong nagpakumbaba, inamin ang pagkakamali pero may hindi pa rin kuntento.

Resign ang gusto.

Paano nga ba mareresolba ang usaping ito?

Pwede bang umupo, mag-usap at magkasundo kung paano malilinis at mapapaganda ang ating Manila Bay?

Para naman hindi maging “Borado in Manila” ang bora natin.



Roque umalma vs DENR official (UP experts bayaran?)

Posted by: [Rose Novenario](#) on October 16, 2020 in [News](#)



ni ROSE NOVENARIO

UMALMA si Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque sa akusasyon ni Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda na bayaran ang UP experts kaya walang Karapatan batikusin ang Manila Bay white sand breach project.

Sinabi ni Roque, batay sa UP Charter o Republic Act (RA) 9500, bahagi ng tungkulin nito ang tulongan ang gobyerno.

“UP has a new charter. It is really a partner of government and that is why I had to distance... In fact, I will go to the extent that I disagree with the statement of USec (Undersecretary) Antiporda but he has already apologized for it,” sabi ni Roque sa virtual Palace press briefing kahapon.

Sa ilalim ng Section 3 ng RA 9500, “UP shall lead as a public service university by providing various forms of community, public, and volunteer service, as well as scholarly and technical assistance to the government, private sector, and civil society while maintaining its standards of excellence.”

“Nasa batas po ‘yan na talagang partner natin ang UP bilang isang national university and, as a professor of 15 years in UP, ginawa din po namin ang katungkulan namin para tulongan ang gobyerno,” ayon kay Roque.

Pinagbintangan kamakalawa ni Antiporda ang mga eksperto mula sa UP Marine Science Institute (UPMSI) na mga bayaran matapos nilang ihayag na ang pagtambak ng dinurog na Dolomite bilang white sand sa 500 meters by 60 meters na bahagi ng Manila front beach sa tabi ng US Embassy ay isang beautification project na masyadong mahal at pansamantala lang.

Sa ilang araw na pagbuhos ng malakas na ulan, halos wala nang makitang pekeng white sand sa baybayin ng Manila Bay at umani ito ng batikos, hindi lang mula sa UP experts, kundi maging sa netizens.

Humingi ng paumanhin si Antiporda sa UP scientists at sinabing wala siyang intensiyon na sirain ang magandang pangalan ng UP at natangay lang raw siya ng kanyang emosyon.



Tinanggap ni Dr. Laura David, UP-MSI director, ang paghingi ng paumanhin ni Antiporda.

Kaugnay nito, nanawagan ang UP Geographic Society na bawiin ni Antiporda ang akusasyon laban sa UP scientists at magbitiw sa puwesto upang mabigyan daan ang ibang mas kalipikado sa kanyang posisyon sa DENR.

“Considering your-ill fitting background for the job as well as your disregard for the opinions of other Filipino scientists, we call on you to formally retract your statements against the [UP Marine Science Institute] and to resign from your position as undersecretary, as both a form of accountability and to give way for other, better qualified candidates to work in the department,” ayon sa UP GeogSoc.

Para kay human rights lawyer Chel Diokno, mas mahal pa ang ginastos ng DENR na P389 milyon para sa Dolomite beach kompara sa mga proyekto ng UPMSI sa loob ng nakalipas na sampung taon nagkakahalaga ng P364 milyon.

“Yung P389M dolomite beach, mas mahal pa ang ginastos ng DENR kaysa 10 years of projects ng marine scientists natin. Pero ang scientists natin, tuloy lang sa pagsisilbi sa bayan. Kaunting katarungan at respeto naman, lalo na galing dun sa mga wala namang expertise sa ginagawa nila,” sabi ni Diokno.

Sinabi ni UP Vice President for public affairs Elena Pernia na ang UP bilang isang public service institution na pinopondohan ng pera ng bayan ay may mandatong ilabas ang resulta ng kanilang mga pag-aaral sa sambayanang Filipino.

Ted Failon blasts DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda on radio, suggests reading material for Manila Bay Rehab plan

Andronico Del Rosario

1 day ago

If Department of Environment and Natural Resources spokesperson Usec. Benny Antiporda won't listen to scientists, maybe he'll care enough to read a government-funded study—one that he should have read once he was appointed as a DENR undersecretary.



© Provided by Dailypedia

No less than Radyo Singko's recent addition Ted Failon blasted Antiporda for skipping material that should help him better understand what needs to be done to revive Manila Bay.

In the video, Failon shares a print-out of the front page of a study commissioned by no less than the Philippine government through the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA): a situation analysis report on NEDA's Manila Bay Sustainable Master Plan, dated December 2018—a mere 6 months after Antiporda was appointed as DENR undersecretary.

"Nung tinanong kita sa aking programa, ang sabi mo hindi mo pa nababasa ito. Uulitin ko: nabasa mo na ba? I'm sure hindi pa," said Failon to Antiporda. He also assumed that the environment secretary himself, Roy Cimatu, hasn't read the two-year-old report yet.





He basically said Antiporda was wasting the millions of pesos to have the study done by not reading it. "Nakadetalye dito ang dapat ninyong gawin kasama na yung pagpapalawak ng bakawan area from Las Piñas all the way."

Failon's payong kaibigan did not go unnoticed—at least from the ever-present eyes of netizens.

They all lauded Failon for calling out Antiporda despite the broadcaster's leanings towards the President as well as blasting the DENR spokesperson for his lack of knowledge on the matter at hand.

voltaire @voltaire

2018 study report funded by taxpayers recommended mangroves, not artificial white sand, in controversial area of Manila Bay, says #TedFailon @DENROfficial @pama_pil @UPMSIGeoOce

DJ Chacha @djchacha
To USEC Antiporda
Love, Ted Failon.



6:52 PM · Oct 15, 2020

1 See voltaire's other Tweets

Peel-ip Almedurch @Po0o0peRchhhhh

could not have been any clearer 🔥

DJ Chacha @djchacha
To USEC Antiporda
Love, Ted Failon.



3:45 PM · Oct 15, 2020

See Peel-ip Almedurch's other Tweets

先生 ANJ @anjelinafolly

Imagine the scope of this study and the fucker will just say bayaran lang kase mga taga UP like???? uhh???? ha????

DJ Chacha @djchacha
To USEC Antiporda
Love, Ted Failon.



3:24 PM · Oct 15, 2020

1 See 先生 ANJ's other Tweets

Alen Clyde @alencyde

The gov't is pouring money sa consultation services pero walang balak i-implement. What's new?

DJ Chacha @djchacha
To USEC Antiporda
Love, Ted Failon.



1:47 PM · Oct 15, 2020 from Manila City, National Capital Region

4 See Alen Clyde's other Tweets

Others also pointed out how Antiporda should at least heed expert advice—even if it’s from a lengthy report.



Antiporda: Sorry-not-sorry for calling UP scientists paid hacks

Will Antiporda listen to Failon? The answer—at least for now—is “not likely”. The Situational Analysis Report Failon was referring to is an extensive document detailing the current state of Manila Bay and its ecosystem.

The 64-page summary alone gives enough insight into the importance of mangroves to the bay’s ecosystem—yet does not even give a hint of “refreshing” the area by Roxas Boulevard by way of dumping crushed dolomite.

Digging into the 70-page paper that focuses on the ecosystem will definitely help the DENR, but it might go unnoticed if Antiporda’s recent behavior is to be accounted for.

In an interview with ANC, Antiporda said his emotions got the best of him. “Tuloy-tuloy po ang lumalabas coming from UP MSI na parang wala na pong tigil.”

Antiporda, however, virtually countered his apology by saying the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) should have gone directly to the DENR to raise their concerns. He also expects them to be “partners” in solving the issues surrounding Manila Bay—as if raising them online will make his reaction any different.

For its part, UP-MSI, through its director Laura David, has “accepted” the apology of Usec. Antiporda. One of UP MSI’s student organizations, however, wasn’t satisfied and called for his resignation.

Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-ph/news/other/ted-failon-blasts-denr-usec-benny-antiporda-on-radio-suggests-reading-material-for-manila-bay-rehab-plan/ar-BB1a6QtG?li=BBR8Mkn>



High hopes for rare PHL dove

By Jonathan L. Mayuga

October 18, 2020



A Luzon bleeding-heart is distinguished from other "bleeding heart" pigeon species for having a more pronounced reddish-hue on its breast that extends to its belly.

It took a few minutes for the first one to walk slowly to an opening of the wooden crate. When the instinct kicked in, the rest of the troop followed, frantically walking outside, flapping their wings and blending with the environment. In a matter of minutes, they were all gone.

Locally called puñalada, the rare, ground-dwelling doves called Luzon bleeding-heart pigeons are finally "home," wild and free in their natural habitat.



Leg bands are attached to the "Lucky 9" Luzon bleeding-heart pigeons from Singapore for identification purposes as they are released by the DENR -BMB in the Angat Watershed in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

The release of the nine Luzon bleeding-heart pigeons on September 15 in the Angat Watershed Reservation in Norzagaray, Bulacan, was considered a "momentous event."

It was the first time the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) released the birds in their natural habitat.

The pigeons were bred in captivity as part of a Wildlife Loan Agreement (WLA) between the Philippines and Singapore that dates back to 2012.

The birds were turned-over by Singapore authorities to the Philippines and were flown back home last month amid the travel restrictions and cancelled flights because of the new coronavirus disease (Covid-19).



Release protocols

The birds have undergone assessment and were declared to be fit for release by the DENR's veterinarians almost a month since they arrived in the country.

Anson Tagtag, chief of the Wildlife Conservation Section, who led the DENR Release Team said they first sought clearance from the National Power Corp. (NPC), which manages the Angat Watershed Reserve.

The team inspected the site of the release along the Tarictic Trail. As part of the protocol, it allowed the birds to settle in and familiarize with their new environment while inside two wooden crates.

“The crate doors were then slowly opened and the birds were allowed to walk out slowly on their own,” Tagtag told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview on October 13.

The birds, he said, were observed to be all agile and alert upon the release.

“After the release, they immediately dispersed, going their separate ways,” Tagtag said.

The team went back at the release site on September 16 and 17 as part of the post-release monitoring activity and observed that the birds have started to learn how to camouflage and hide at the sight of the team.

“This was a good sign that they are learning to adapt, increasing their chances of survival,” said Tagtag, who expressed hope that the birds will soon join the natural breeding population of the rare doves in the area.

Born in Singapore

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview on October 12 the birds are progenies of the two original pairs of Luzon bleeding-hearts the Philippines sent to Singapore in 2012.

The project was under a captive-breeding program of the DENR through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) in partnership with Singapore Zoo and Aylon Zoo in Rizal province.

“Actually, there were 10 of them, but one of the birds died because of an injury. Perhaps a result of the infighting between the birds during transport,” said Calderon, also the concurrent BMB chief.

In the last eight years, the WLA for the Luzon bleeding-heart has produced a total of 60 progenies. The DENR is hoping to see them brought back to the Philippines in the near future.

Illicit pet trade

Targeted for the illicit pet trade, the Luzon bleeding-heart is currently listed as “Near Threatened” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

It is on the “Vulnerable” list of the DENR owing to its decreasing population.

Another major cause of its population decline is the massive destruction of lowland forest—known to be the natural habitat of the Luzon bleeding-heart.



The shy and secretive ground-dwelling doves are quiet and rarely leave the ground, that's why the name, making them easy target by those involved in illicit pet trade.

They feed on small fruits like wild berries and insects, like most birds, thus, playing the role of nature's farmers in the wild.

Unique features

Endemic to Luzon Island, the ground-dwelling doves are uniquely identifiable by its more pronounced "blood" feature on its breast.

There are five known bleeding-hearts in the Philippines—the Mindoro, Negros, Sulu, Mindanao and Luzon—which are distinguished for their reddish hue that extends down the belly, depicting a bleeding heart.

Monomorphic, or both sexes of the birds look the same, except that the males are slightly bigger, the Luzon-endemic dove produces only two eggs per clutch, or a pair of chicks per season.

Angat Watershed:

Ideal release site

Calderon, a forestry expert, said the Angat Watershed was chosen as the site for the release of the birds owing to its "strategic location."

"It is near the city, while it serves as a geographical pathway to the Sierra Madre Mountain Range, making it an ideal area for wildlife release," he explained.

Other wildlife species are also being released in the watershed after rehabilitation at the BMB Wildlife Rescue Center.

While the Angat Watershed is managed by NPC mainly to support power generation, contributing 200 MW to the Luzon grid, water for domestic use of Metro Manila and water for irrigation of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga, the watershed reservation is rich in both flora and fauna, and home to a large number of endemic species.

With a total area of 54,574 hectares of lush lowland forest, and owing to its location in the Sierra Madre, Angat Watershed is an important wildlife habitat, supporting at least 43 species of endemic and native birds, including birds with restricted range, such as the Luzon bleeding-heart pigeon, according to the DENR-BMB.

Philippines, Singapore partnership

The partnership between the Philippines and Singapore for the Luzon bleeding-heart is part of a WLA in order to establish an ex situ, or off site, population.

This conservation strategy, the DENR-BMB chief said, would ensure that the species will not be wiped out or rendered extinct by zoonotic diseases.

This is the same reason behind the WLA entered into between the Philippines and Singapore last year for the iconic Philippine eagle, Calderon said.



Mutually beneficial

The successful implementation of the agreement is mutually beneficial to both the Philippines and its partner, Singapore, in the case of the Luzon bleeding-heart.

“The advantage of a WLA is that we are able to document the breeding and maturation of a species at no cost to the government. Our partner shares to us what they have learned in the documentation under the captive-breeding program,” he said.

He explained that since the Philippines has no specific program for some of the threatened species, such as the Luzon-bleeding heart, it is only practical to enter into a partnership with private institutions.

For the DENR’s country-partner and private institutions, such as the Singapore Zoo and Rizal province’s Avilon Zoo, they will be able to showcase the rare birds for the public’s appreciation, and also get to learn from the experience, Calderon said.

Conservation measure

A WLA is allowed under Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, for critically endangered species.

In the case of the Luzon bleeding-heart pigeon, which was classified as near threatened and vulnerable, the aim was to prevent the species’ further population decline through captive breeding outside its natural habitat.

Part of the deal is to ensure that the species being loaned under the program will not die.

Due diligence

Calderon said entering into a WLA is done with due diligence.

“It is a mortal sin when a species we loan for conservation perishes,” he said partly in Filipino. He recalled that there were attempts to “borrow” a tarsier by a private institution for a captive-breeding program in Russia, which he rejected outright, saying the tarsiers will not survive in such an extremely cool climate.

“Tarsiers can’t live in a cold environment. We need to exercise due diligence,” he said.

Public support

To ensure the success of the government’s wildlife conservation program, Calderon called on the public to help protect the birds by simply leaving them alone in the forest.

“Ultimately, we can only say our WLA for the Luzon bleeding-heart pigeon is successful when they finally find a mate and start to lay eggs and reproduce,” he said.

“As responsible citizens eager to take those steps crucial to the birds’ survival, we appeal to everyone, especially with the communities residing near the birds’ release area, to help conserve and protect the birds and other wildlife,” he added.



One way of helping conserve the country's threatened wildlife is by protecting and restoring the country's ecosystems by planting endemic tree species so that the wildlife that depends on the forest may thrive.

“Seeing these birds existing unhampered in the wild evokes a renewed confidence that humans and wildlife can coexist harmoniously,” he said.

Image credits: [DENR-BMB](#)



Is 'Papa Dave' the Philippines' largest crocodile in captivity now?

Published October 17, 2020, 7:39 AM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

The giant saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) caught off the waters of Simunul town in Tawi-Tawi last Oct. 14 turns out to be male and is named "Papa Dave," according to an officer of the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy-Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao-(MENRE-BARMM).



(CENRO Abdulmukim Maruji / MANILA BULLETIN)

Fisherfolk who saw and caught the large reptile initially named it "Mama Bull" and was intended as a partner for "Papa Bull," a male crocodile that was also captured in the municipality of Simunul in 2017.

However, upon the assessment of experts from the *Crocodylus Porosus* Philippines, Inc. (CPPI), the crocodile caught off Taytay beach was found to be a male saltwater crocodile based on its large size.

In a phone interview with the Manila Bulletin, Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer of the MENRE-BARMM Tawi-Tawi Abdulmukim Maruji said the saltwater crocodile officially measures 17 feet and 11 inches long.

It is slightly shorter than the initial estimate of 18 feet, but it is still larger than "Papa Bull" which measures 16 feet and 11 inches.

Male crocodiles are known to grow up to 20 feet, while females are much smaller and rarely surpass 10 feet.

Upon confirmation that it is a male species, the reptile was named "Papa Dave," after the name of the local resident who first saw the crocodile.

Maruji said the reptile, which was sighted at around 1 p.m. and captured at 3 p.m. on Oct. 14, "possibly originated near Sabah, Malaysia, and rode along the sea currents to Tawi-Tawi."

Earlier this year, initial research findings by the CPPI show that Malaysia serves as a "bridge" for the crocodiles propagating in southern Palawan and traveling all the way to Tawi-Tawi. The connection between the events will further be established, according to the MENRE-BARMM.



Maruji said “Papa Dave” has been transferred to the custody of the municipal government of Simunul in Papa Bull’s Park and has not shown any signs of injury or illness.

The park is located within the Simunul Municipal Hall Compound, which is also where “Papa Bull” is being kept.

He noted that “Papa Dave” will be able to move comfortably as the park’s area is more or less 2,000 to 3,000 square meters. It is also swampy and muddy, with matured mangroves, so it can easily adapt to captive conditions.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Assistant Secretary and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Ricardo Calderon said they will still validate if “Papa Dave” is now the Philippines’ largest crocodile in captivity.

Measuring 20 feet and 3 inches, “Lolong” was once the world’s largest crocodile in captivity until his death in February, 2013.

It was caught off the waters of Bunawan, Agusan del Sur on Sept. 3, 2011.



Saving the corals

posted October 17, 2020 at 08:58 pm



Divers of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) of Masbate transplant coral fragments and rehabilitate reef balls within the Colorada Marine Protected Area at Barangay Tigbao in Aroroy. The reef balls provide shelter and serve as a breeding ground to the reef fishes thriving inside the marine protected area. The project was done in partnership with the Masbate Gold Project. DENR Bicol



P2M taklobo nasabat sa Palawan

By Abante Tonite — Last updated Oct 18, 2020

METRO



Photo Courtesy of karipearls.com



Laglag sa kamay ng mga awtoridad sa Narra, Palawan ang isang lalaki na nahulihan ng isang toneladang giant clam o taklobo na tinatayang aabot sa P2.5 milyon ang halaga kamakalawa ng umaga.

Sa ulat, sinagawa ang paghuli sa suspek na kinilalang si Markin Claud, 32-anyos, sa Purok Bagong Lipunan, Brgy. Teresa. Wala umano itong naipakitang legal na dokumento nang siyasatin ang kanyang dalang mga taklobo.

Mahaharap ito sa kaukulang kaso, dahil tinuturing na threatened species ang mga taklobo at kabilang sa red list ng International Union for Conservation of Nature.

PHL kids learn about migratory birds, endemic duck in a new children's book

By BusinessMirror

October 18, 2020



Learning about nature may be challenging under Covid-19 stay-at-home restrictions, but the Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands (SCPW), in partnership with the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), found fun ways to do it while cultivating the children's sense of adventure.

Through a combination of technology and old-school story-telling style, grade-schoolers were introduced to some of the migratory birds, their connection to human and environmental health, and the reason for their conservation, during the celebration of the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) on October 10.



Children enjoy getting to know about migratory birds and why they should be conserved.

The SCPW and the ACB launched a children's book on migratory birds titled, *Si Papan at ang mga Dayong Ibon*, during the webinar "Click it, Sketch It: An Adventure with Migratory Birds."

The book narrates the adventures of "Papan," a Philippine duck in the Candaba marshlands, and the migratory birds "Takyad," a black-winged stilt, and "Kalay," a Far Eastern curlew.

Takyad flew from Alaska, where the changing climate caused their late winter migration to the south.



Meanwhile, Kalay and its flock faced a number of difficulties during their migration from Siberia to Australia, including being hunted by humans and facing pollution in their feeding areas and the declining number and quality of staging sites.

In the story, the migratory birds and the endemic duck lamented their dwindling population despite the important roles they play in maintaining ecological balance.

“The survival of migratory birds is intricately connected with ours,” said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, underlining to the WMBD theme, “Birds Connect Our World.”

“Tangible benefits can be derived from their protection, such as ensuring genetic diversity and gene flow and preventing spillovers of zoonotic diseases such as Covid-19 by keeping viruses within their natural hosts, to name a few.”

Drivers of biodiversity loss—such as human encroachment, land-use conversion, and hunting and poaching—continue to persist, contributing to the decline in numbers of these ecologically valuable birds, she said.

Global data sources show that in the Asean region, 70 migratory species from a total of 510 have been listed as critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable and near threatened.

The Asean region, being one of the important flyway sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, is rich with wetlands, home to 60 percent of tropical peatlands and 42 percent of mangrove forests in the world.

All these ecosystems serve as habitats for local birds, and migration sites for migratory species. Conserving these ecosystems is, therefore, connected to keeping these birds safe and their population thriving.

According to the ACB, the Asean member-states remain hopeful and continue to look for creative and efficient ways to achieve the region’s biodiversity conservation targets.

The number of Ramsar sites—or wetlands of international importance, has grown with 25 new designated sites over the past decade. At present, the region has a total of 56 Ramsar sites, covering an estimated area of 2.6 million hectares.

“These favorable circumstances offer an optimistic glimpse of the conservation of migratory birds and the protection of ecosystems,” Lim said.

Other efforts are being done in the region, including facilitating cooperation and research through the Asean Flyway Network; protected areas and ecosystems conservation through the Asean Heritage Parks (AHPs) Programme; and mainstreaming of biodiversity across diverse sectors and segments of society, including youth.

Lim emphasized the importance of the youth’s participation in biodiversity conservation. One of the Centre’s programme, called the Asean Youth Biodiversity Program (AYBP), builds capacity and relationships for young leaders in biodiversity conservation through experiential learning.

Under the AYBP, the ACB will likewise serve as an adviser to this year’s Flyway Youth Forum, the first-ever international youth event on migratory waterbirds and wetland conservation in the East Asian Australasian Flyway.



“With this book, we hope to ignite the children’s appreciation for birds and biodiversity,” Lim said. “It is never too early to start developing the love for nature. It is from this appreciation that we can foster a deeper understanding of its value and vital connection to our lives.”

Based on a story developed by the SCPW Executive Director Amy Lecciones, Darry Shel Estorba and Dana Rose Salonoy collaborated on writing and illustrating the storybook on migratory birds.

“The SCPW hopes to continue collaborating with ACB in communicating the importance of wetlands and biodiversity through various media and catering to various audiences,” Lecciones said. “This children’s storybook is part of our efforts to come up with communication materials that will appeal to our young audience and have an even broader reach if it will be translated into other Asean languages.”

The virtual launch of the publication featured a storytelling session among the young audiences from all over the country including a group from the New Faith Children’s Home Foundation, performances from the children, and a coloring activity.

A video on migratory birds produced by the East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership and localised by SCPW was also shown during the event.

Image credits: [Dess Camitan](#), [Aaron Lecciones](#), [Bebot Sabangan Jr.](#), [Jose Carlo Quintos](#)

Therapy and the dangers of a ‘plant economy’

By: [Maricar Cinco](#) - Reporter / [@maricarcincoINO](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM October 18, 2020

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna, Philippines — Weng Espiritu-Borromeo, 38, calls herself a compulsive buyer — even when shopping for plants. Between cost and aesthetics, she’d go for the latter.

While her parents have been gardening as therapy for her father, who suffered a stroke in 2014, she only started growing indoor plants when the coronavirus pandemic struck.

“When I bought my first plants, it felt like having given birth to a child again,” she said.

Borromeo now owns a collection of selloum leaves, a pine tree, jade plants, snake plants and golden pothos among palms and air plants in Taytay town, Rizal province. All of them she bought online from a seller in Bulacan province.

She started growing backyard vegetables, too, a safety net in case the lockdown disrupted food supply.

The pandemic spurred a brisk “plant economy” not only in the Philippines but across urban centers in Southeast Asia, said Theresa Mundita Lim, director of the Laguna-based Asean Centre for Biodiversity.

But if left unchecked, it could drive fast forest poaching or unwittingly spread invasive species when transporting nonnative plants.

In a business that seemed fairly safe, it’s one thing that needs nipping in the bud.



RESURGENCE Demand for ornamental plants has seen a resurgence during the COVID-19 pandemic as households turn their attention to gardening as a way to ease anxiety and relieve stress. Garden owners in the town of Bay in Laguna province say indoor plants, like Alocasia, or African mask plant, are among the most sought-after varieties. —CHRIS QUINTANA



Genetically programmed

“Because we are experiencing limited mobility, the situation encourages more people to resort to backyard gardening [to] while away their time and relieve stress,” Lim said.

Interestingly, only in the Philippines there is a term for people jumping on the bandwagon—“plantitos” or “plantitas.”

In Malaysia, a market survey in May showed 86 percent of respondents having bought gardening tools during the movement control order. In Indonesia, houseplants, like *Monstera adansonii* (Rp 300,000 to Rp 1 million, or \$20 to \$70), have become popular online.

Susan Aquino-Ong, who teaches therapeutic horticulture at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and a fellow of the Philippine Association of Landscape Architects, said humans were “genetically programmed” to connect with nature and gardening was a collective “response to fight for emotional stability” during the pandemic.

“We’ve seen this during the Great Depression in the 1930s when people resorted to planting and interior gardens flourished,” she said.

In the Philippines, the multimillion-dollar ornamental industry blossomed in the 1970s, driven by the beautification programs of then first lady Imelda Marcos.

But the Philippines has not expanded its ornamental industry as much as the Netherlands and the United States where transactions involved billions of dollars worth of exports and imports. Locally, it was on a steady rise until 2000 when the Philippines underwent civil unrest leading to then President Joseph Estrada’s ouster.

“Plants feed the soul. It fills a void you never even knew existed,” Ong said.

But they also fill a void of another sort for the likes of Elma Tandang, 41, who supplied asters for 16 years to Manila’s Dangwa flower market until it was shuttered in March.

“When they reopened Dangwa, we hurriedly got a travel pass only to realize it was useless because they suspended the bus [trips],” she said.

Online following

In September, Los Baños opened a “mini-Dangwa” or stalls for local cut flower suppliers displaced by the pandemic. They have since included potted plants, ferns and succulents, some from Silang town in Cavite province or from Cagayan province.

Tandang said the demand for ornamental plants pushed the price thrice higher, yet physical stores were “bait fishing” for customers, usually on private cars that pulled over the national highway.

She said it might take a while before hobbyists discover them, but online, aroids, such as *Caladium*, *pothos*, *Monstera*, *Philodendron selloum*, *Rhaphidophora* and *Aglaonema*, already gained a large following, said Annalee Hadsall, a botany professor at UPLB.

A pot of the slow-growing *aglaonema* that makes an excellent foliage costs P1,000 online. But so are the rare and exotic orchids, and hoyas, or the endangered pitcher plants, collected off limestone cliffs in Cebu, Hadsall said.



Some houseplants take years to spawn a branch, while others, like the pitcher, barely survive a week in lowland or urban centers.

Theresa Tenazas, officer in charge of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Wildlife Resources Division, said exotic plants were being traded like elephant ivory or a rhino horn—“the harder to get, the more value is added to it.”

The Philippines is one of the countries with the highest endemism in the world and the fifth in terms of the number of plant species.

In DENR Administrative Order No. 2017-11, the national list identified 984 threatened plant species in varying conservation status. More than 700 of them are endemic.



GREEN STOP The local government of Los Baños in Laguna has set up along the national highway a small version of Manila’s popular Dangwa flower market for cut flower growers and plant traders after they encountered problems in transporting their products to Metro Manila due to travel restrictions. —CLIFFORD NUÑEZ

Potential

This increases Philippines’ potential to become a major consumer and source of traded flora, as it has been with wild fauna.

Between 1996 and 2018, 12 of the government’s major wildlife seizures involved smuggled animals, while only one operation in 2017 led to the confiscation of 1,000 pitcher plants and lady slipper orchids, based on data from the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB).

Wildlife law enforcers were up to the challenge as they began scouring the internet for red flags and verifying field reports of illegal plant collection, said Rogelio Demelletes Jr., BMB senior ecosystems management specialist.

They also heightened wildlife monitoring in Butuan City, Claver in Surigao del Norte, and in Zamboanga Peninsula, where alarming poaching activities had been reported since August. Authorities have appealed to hobbyists to buy only from legitimate nurseries and to propagators to secure permits for parental stocks.

In March, the DENR suspended the transport permits for all wildlife and forest products as governments recognized the crucial role of wildlife trade in the spread of COVID-19, a zoonotic disease. The suspension was lifted in May when the lockdown was eased and limited economic activities resumed.



TWO SHADES Rhoda Felix says the “doble kara” (double shade, or having two faces or colors) type *Caladium* is among the bestselling potted plants in her garden in Bay, Laguna. —
CHRIS QUINTANA

Invasive species

While there is little documentation of disease transmission from plants to plants or from plants to animals or humans, scientists have been concerned about plants, traded as commodity, becoming an unwilling vector in spreading invasive animal or insect species.

There were also weeds, like the coronitas (*Lantana camara*) and sky flower (*Thunbergia grandiflora*), previously introduced into the market as ornamental plants but ended up “feral,” or abandoned in the environment after growers stopped tending to them.

“[They eventually began] suffocating trees in the lower slopes of Mt. Makiling,” said Ireneo Lit Jr., curator of the UPLB Museum of Natural History.

In 2000, UPLB scientists spotted the invasive Asian painted frog (*Kaloula pulchra*) in Laguna and believed they came with the potted bromeliads imported from Southeast Asian countries. In 2013, another invasive species native to the Caribbean islands, the greenhouse frog (*Eleutherodactylus planirostris*), was detected in Mindanao.

Lit said the Asian painted frog must have burrowed through the potting soil, while university researcher Camila Meneses said the greenhouse frog possibly survived in transit through imported exotic plants.

The presence of these alien frog species has been recorded elsewhere in the Philippines since. “Plants are at the bottom of the food chain that its mere translocation may disrupt the natural food flow [in the ecosystem],” Meneses said.



Edible landscapes

October 17, 2020 | Filed under: Medium Rare, Opinion

BY JULLIE Y. DAZA



IF there was ever an original “plantita” it’s got to be Mina Gabor, former secretary of tourism. For the last many years she has been promoting sustainable tourism, “mother” of ecotourism and farm tourism, all of which involve a passion for planting for the environment, for aesthetics, for nutrition, for no reason other than the desire to propagate plants for their value to the eyes, mind, and soul. Add to the list, if you insist, the commerce of man.

Just listen to her talk about Silang, her newly, dearly beloved place of affection: “Go and look at their flower farms – a stretch of six, seven kilometers all planted to flowers, just flowers, flowers, flowers!”

Alfonso, in her opinion, is not or no longer the home of flower farms, the now place being Silang, Silang the town next to the tourist magnet known as Tagaytay City. For all of the above reasons, Mina has moved her International School of Sustainable Tourism to Silang.

Besides conveying the splendors of Silang’s flower farms, there’s excitement in Mina’s voice because her school has just won the bid for the Philippines to host the first Eco-Tourism International Conference and Travel Mart come February 2022. That conference and expo, while being the first, will mark the 20th anniversary of the International Year of Eco-Tourism. She has invited 33 of the world’s experts in tourism to come and be amazed at what we have to offer, not only beaches and resorts but also farms and gardens.

Between now and 2022 – it’s sooner than you think, consider how politicians are already positioning themselves for the next national elections – Mina continues to plant the seeds of tourism as a vocation. She talks about “edible landscapes,” a newly developing trend to grow vegetables as part of a landscape theme; for example, growing vertical gardens, building arches and lattices with which to frame the greens, using plants for fencing, edging, etc.

While most plant lovers cannot resist ornamental plants, such that they live with them indoors or have fashionably moved their gardens from the back of the house to the front in order to show them off, there are those with a more pragmatic attitude: grow edible plants for food security. Food for tomorrow.

Trece Martires City pushes for zero waste



By Dennis Abrina

October 18, 2020

TRECE MARTIRES CITY, Cavite: Mayor Gemma Lubigan, together with the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, Eco Waste Coalition, Break Free from Plastic, GAIA Asia Pacific and Cavite Green Coalition, signed a memorandum of agreement for the zero-waste campaign on Friday. Present were Ronnie Javier of the City Environment and Natural Resources Office, Aileen Lucero (National coordinator-EcoWaste Coalition) and Ochie Tolentino of Cavite Green Coalition (EcoWaste Coalition-Cavite coordinator). The Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines is a public interest network of community, church, school, environment and health groups, united by the common goal to end the proliferation of waste through the promotion of environmental justice.



Barangay basurahan ng infectious waste

Saturday, October 17, 2020 [Marlon Purificacion](#)

TINOTOO ni Caloocan City Councilor Vince Hernandez ang pangako sa mga kababayan na magbigay ng barangay trash bins na puwedeng pagtapunan ng mga gamit na facemask, personal protective equipment (PPE) at iba pang bagay na itinuturing na 'infectious waste.'

Isinusulat ko ito'y umabot na sa 200 basurahan ang naipamahagi ni Vince sa halos 70 barangay at 24 health centers sa lungsod.

Kung matatandaan, nitong nakalipas na Agosto ay nanawagan ang konsehal na magkaroon ng hiwalay na basurahan para sa mga gamit na face shields at face mask.

Tugon ito sa mga naglalabasang report na karamihan sa ating mga kababayan ay kung saan-saan na lamang itinatapon ang mga gamit na face mask na mapanganib sa ating kalusugan.

Hiwalay pa ito sa naunang pinagtibay na ordinansa ng Sangguniang Panglungsod na ipagbawal ang pagdura, pagbahing, pag-ubo at pag-ihing sa mga pampublikong lugar upang maiwasan ang pagkalat pang lalo ng kinatatakutang COVID-19

Ang pangunahing may akda ng ordinansang ito ay si Vince rin na kasalukuyang presidente ng Sangguniang Kabataan Federation of Caloocan City.

Dahil sa magandang proyekto, agad nakipag-ugnayan sa batang konehal ang Sentinel Upcycling Corporations, isang kompanya na gumagawa ng mga plastic at recycle na basurahan.

Labis napahanga kay Hernandez ang Sentinel kaya sila mismo ang nag-alok na mag-donate ng 200 trash bins na isa-isa ipinamahagi ng masipag na konsehal.

Sa pakikipagtulungan nina Caloocan City Mayor Oca Malapitan at Congressman Ayong Malapitan, tinawag ang tapunan ng basura para sa mga gamit na face mask na: 'Barangay Basurahan ng Infectious Wastes' na makikita ngayon sa iba't ibang barangay hall at health center.

May pakiusap sina Vince at Sentinel sa mga kababayan natin sa Caloocan. Sana, bukod sa pagtatapon sa tamang lalagyan para sa mga nabubulok, hindi nabubulok at 'hazardous waste,' ipunin na rin natin ang mga plastic na basura gaya ng bote ng softdrinks, shampoo, mantika at maraming iba pa na puwedeng i-recycle ng kompanya.

Malaking bagay umano ito para sa Sentinel upang lumawak pa ang kanilang ginagawang pagtulong na bahagi ng kanilng 'corporate social responsibility.'

Katulad ito ng proyekto sa longest noontime show ng Eat Bulaga na nagpapaipon sa mga manonood at sumasali sa "Juan for All, All for Juan," upang gawin namang plastic na upuan sa mga paaralan sa iba't ibang sulok ng bansa.

Samantala, bukod sa makabuluhang ordinansa at paggawa, walang patid din ang ginagawang pagtulong ni Vince.

Mayroon itong pa-goto at pa-arroz caldo sa kanyang mga kababayan na ang bansag naman ay 'Best Lugaw on Wheels (BLOW out) ni ConVincled!'

Tatlong beses isang linggo kung magpalugaw si Konsi sa iba't ibang barangay. Kada barangay, aabot sa 1,000 katao ang nakatitikim ng masarap at masustansiyang pa-lugaw ni ConVincled.



“Pamatid gutom po sa ating mga kababayan na alam nating hirap dahil sa pandemic. Sana po maibsan kahit kaunti ang kumakalam nilang sikmura,” ani Hernandez.

Kamakalawa ay nagpakain rin ito ng pansit at turon sa mga taga-Bagong Barrio, South Caloocan. Pa-blow out na rin ito ni Konsi na nagdiriwang ng kanyang ika-24 taong kaarawan ngayong araw ng Linggo, Oktubre 18!

Umaga, tanghali, gabi at kahit hatinggabi, walang kapaguran ang ginagawang pag-iikot ni Vince sa Caloocan upang personal na marinig ang hinaing at pangangailangan ng mga taga-Kankalo. Ginagawa rin niya ito hindi dahil may ugali na rin siyang trapo (traditional politicians), kundi dito rin siya nakakita ng personal na kasiyahan – ang tumulong sa mahihirap at nangangailangan.

Katunayan, may anim na pamilya ang nasunugan kamakailan sa Bgy. 160 ang kagyat na binisita ni Hernandez para magbigay ng kaunting tulong base na rin sa kanyang kakayahan.

Kahit ang nag-viral sa social media na si Nanay Grasya ng Bgy. 163 ay personal ding pinasyalan ni Vince upang abutan naman ng kaunting ayuda.

Sa edad na 24-taong gulang, maituturing na ‘bata’ pa sa mundo ng serbisyo publiko si Vince. Pero ang ipinakitang galing, husay, sipag at kabaitan nito ay sapat na upang siya’y hangaan ng kanyang mga kababayan.

Salamat sa dedikasyon sa trabaho at salamat din sa masisipag na opisyaes at miyembro ng SK Federation sa lungsod na palagiang nakasuporta sa magagandang programa ni Vince.

Keep it up, Councilor Vince dahil hindi lang buong kalooban ang nagpapasalamat sa’yo, kundi sigurado rin akong proud na proud sa iyo ang Mom and Dad mo!

SI ConVincED ay anak po nina Caloocan City Administrator Engr. Oliver and Mrs. Henedine Hernandez.

Happy birthday Sir Vince, the Service Prince!

Cheers!



P&G, World Vision push sustainable waste management



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF P&G

P&G Philippines recovers 3.2 million pieces of plastic sachet wastes and upcycles them into school chairs with safety dividers.

Procter and Gamble (P&G) Philippines and World Vision's Pag-Asa sa Basura program has recovered a total of 3.2 million pieces of plastic sachets and over 870,000 plastic bottles – part of P&G's commitment to help boost plastic waste recovery in the country.

Millions of used sachets that could have ended up in landfills or as marine litter have been successfully upcycled to school chairs with safety dividers. After year-round collection efforts over the school year 2019-2020, P&G and World Vision have donated back 1,040 upcycled plastic school chairs to 26 participating schools in Malabon and Quezon City.

The chairs are now being used by teachers and parents during pick-up and submission of modules as the schools transition to blended learning and will be even more useful when schools gradually resume face-to-face learning.

With the strong support of the Department of Education (DepEd), P&G and World Vision Pag-asa sa Basura program established links between schools and their respective materials recovery facilities (MRF) to systematize recovery and collection, segregation, recycling and upcycling efforts.

The program rehabilitated the MRF and distributed collection bins to aid plastic collection and segregation and in return, students also received incentives such as school supplies and gift tokens for collecting plastic waste and turning these over to the MRF for eventual upcycling.

"P&G is strongly committed to being a Force for Good and a Force for Growth in the country, especially during these challenging times. We are committed to providing our essential health and hygiene products while building a

sustainable future for the environment, communities and the country," said P&G president and general manager Raffy Fajardo.

The Pag-asa sa Basura program is grounded on the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003).

"Managing and mitigating plastic waste requires collaborative, innovative and sustainable solutions. Through this program, we enabled multiple stakeholders to be part of the solution, from students and teachers, MRF and upcycling partners, to LGU, NGO and private companies such as P&G," he added.

From a manufacturing standpoint, P&G's Cabuyao Manufacturing Plant, where most of its trusted health and hygiene brands are produced, is already

a certified Zero Manufacturing Waste to Landfill facility.

P&G is also committed to finding ways to now mitigate post-consumer plastic waste. It continuously works on creating sustainable brand innovations and solutions that will enable responsible consumption among its consumers.

Alongside plastic waste recovery and recycling, the Pag-asa sa Basura program educated students, teachers and parents on the fundamentals of proper solid waste management. To deepen their awareness and commitment, World Vision trained over 50 teachers and parents, who all became the strong advocates and prime movers for the schools and their respective communities.

They were trained on plastic waste segregation, urban agriculture and hydroponics to ensure the sustainability of the schools' waste management

system even after the program ends.

"Education on proper solid waste management is the first and most critical aspect of the Pag-asa sa Basura program. This creates a solid foundation for environmental awareness, discipline on proper waste disposal and realize the importance of recycling and the circular economy. In doing so, we are able to nurture citizens who are aware, knowledgeable and able to act on the environmental issues we are facing today," said Rommel Fuerte, national director of World Vision Philippines.

An initial qualitative assessment of the program also showed that it has helped deepen knowledge on plastic waste segregation, educated students on environmental responsibilities at an early age, and enhanced the leadership skills and personal discipline of students and teachers.

Garcia sets deadline for sand, gravel firms to comply with permits, taxes

By: Morexette Marie B. Erram - Multimedia Reporter - CDN Digital|October 17,2020 - 03:18 PM



Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia denies rumors that she and her chief of staff tested positive for COVID-19 (CDN Digital FILE)

CEBU CITY, Philippines — The Cebu Provincial government has reminded firms involved in the processing and distribution of sand and gravel in Cebu province to abide by government mandates.

Otherwise, they may face sanctions from the Capitol.

Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia has told sand and gravel crushing plant operators and processors in Cebu province, during a meeting last October 14, that they have until October 28, 2020, to comply with the required tax payment and accreditation.

Failure to do so, Garcia, in a report by the Capitol-ran Sugbo News, said they would be facing a Cease and Desist Order (CDO).

“Kamo, nag-negosyo man mo dinhi, kinahanglan sad nga duna mo’y tulubagon sa Probinsya kay dili man pud ni nako aku-on, di man ni nako i-sulod sa bulsa. I-translate man ni into services ug infrastructure,” said Garcia.

(As firms doing businesses here, you also have responsibilities for Cebu province. I will not claim any of your contributions as mine nor will I divert them for my own personal use. We will translate these into services and infrastructure.)

The governor was reminding operators of an existing provincial ordinance that imposes a 10 percent tax on ordinary stones, sand, gravel, earth, and other quarry resources extracted on public lands within the Province as well as the need to secure the governor’s accreditation.

Garcia also said other players in the province regulated by national government agencies, such as the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of Central Visayas (MGB – 7), are not exempted.

“Bisan pa og industrial permit na inyong gikuptan wa man nato gibutang diri nga kadtong mga crushing plants nga IP (industrial permit) ang gigunitan way labot, tanan man ni, walay exemption for as long as you are operating within the territorial jurisdiction of the Province of Cebu,” she stated.

(Even if you are holding an industrial permit (IP), our ordinance did not say crushing plants with IP are exempted. This applies to all. There is no exemption for as long as you are operating within the territorial jurisdiction of the Province of Cebu.)



Sugbo News reported that under the amended Section 124 of the Revenue Code of Cebu, the Capitol collects tax equivalent to 10 percent of the local fair market value per cubic meter of all ordinary stones, sand, gravel, earth, and other quarry resources extracted on public lands within its territorial jurisdiction, including holders of permits, licenses, contracts or agreements issued by entities other than the Province of Cebu.

Projects

Garcia said taxes collected from sand and gravel operators would be used to fund infrastructure projects initiated by the provincial government.

She added that the Capitol was targeting to either construct new or rehabilitate provincial and barangay roads spanning up to a total of 650 kilometers this year.

“Daghan kaayo ta’g infrastructure projects. Mao na nga gi-ingnan nato ang treasurer nga i-maximize nato ang atong revenues, kinahanglan maningkamot ta nga masaka nato ang atong collection kay ubay-ubay ang gastuanan sa Probinsya,” she added.

(We have a lot of infrastructure projects. That is why we told the treasurer to maximize our revenues. We should work hard to increase our collection because the province has a lot of expenses to pay.)

The report also said collected taxes would also be used to fund the installation of water systems as well as other programs for the indigents, youth, women, senior citizens, students, barangay health workers, barangay tanods, day care workers, and barangay animal health aides.

/dbs



2,673 pang bagong kaso ng COVID naitala; 73 nasawi, 539 gumaling



October 17, 2020 @ 4:00 PM 15 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Umakyat na sa 354,338 ang kabuuang kaso ng coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), batay sa Department of Health (DOH) makaraang maitala ang karagdagang 2,673 sa datos.

Dagdag pa rito ang 539 na nakarekober na ngayon ay 295,312 na habang nadagdagan naman ng 73 ang nasawi kung kaya't umabot ito sa 6,603.

Sa ulat ng mga nasawi, 49 ang naitala noong Oktubre; tatlo noong Setyembre; 18 noong Agosto; dalawa noong Hulyo at isa noong Mayo.

Samantala, patuloy namang binabantayan ang 52,423 aktibong kaso na kasalukuyang ginagamot at nasa ilalim ng quarantine.

84.7 percent dito ang mild; 11 percent ang asymptomatic; 1.5 percent ang severe at 2.9 percent ang nasa kritikal na kondisyon.

Habang 14 laboratoryo naman ang nagsumite ng kani-kanilang mga report. **Jocelyn Domenden**



A healthy Earth needs indigenous peoples

By: [Terry Teegee](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

05:01 AM October 17, 2020

Vancouver—In May 2019, a landmark report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services painted a bleak picture of our planet's health. Around one million animal and plant species—more than ever before in human history—are now threatened with extinction, many within decades. Pollution is proliferating, land degradation is accelerating, and we are nowhere near on track to achieve global goals for protecting biodiversity and achieving sustainability.

But, even as media touted the report's dire warnings, they largely missed another of its key findings: lands and waters that are owned, managed, and used by indigenous peoples and local communities are much healthier than those that aren't. A growing body of research supports the clear implication that indigenous peoples have a vital role to play in addressing the biodiversity crisis.

Only recently have international discussions about environmental issues begun to acknowledge the role of indigenous communities. Over the last year, delegates of the 196 parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) participated in countless workshops aimed at producing a new international agreement setting common goals and targets for reversing biodiversity decline, using ecosystems sustainably, and ensuring that the benefits they confer are shared equally. And in their most recent discussions of the initial draft of the post-2020 framework, the parties recognized the importance of including indigenous peoples in the process. This was an apparent nod to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which promotes our full and effective participation in all matters that concern us.

Yet, in practice, indigenous peoples continue to play a very limited role in biodiversity discussions. The second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, held in Rome in February, is a case in point. We sat at the back of the room listening to delegates tout the benefits of indigenous knowledge for protecting nature and debate the legitimacy of our rights to our biodiversity-rich territories. We worked tirelessly to persuade the parties to include our proposed text in the official meeting record. Though some progress was ultimately made, it will not be nearly enough to address the biodiversity crisis. In fact, we did not hear a single proposal that would spur the paradigm shift that our planet so desperately needs.

In my previous career as a professional forester in British Columbia, I saw firsthand the destruction wrought by unsustainable forestry practices, which reflect a utilitarian approach to nature: The planet and its ecosystems are little more than a source of material wealth. This approach is anathema to indigenous knowledge, culture, and laws—the very factors that explain our superior record of environmental stewardship.

Indigenous peoples' connection to our lands, waters, air, and other natural resources is deeply embedded in our cultures and traditions. We hold ceremonies to show our gratitude and respect for the natural gifts on which our survival depends. This instills in us a deep understanding of—and commitment to—our duties and responsibilities as nature's stewards and guardians. We know that we need nature as much as it needs us.



I believe that the world's failure to embrace such a holistic perspective lies at the root of the imbalances that are propelling our planet's destruction. We cannot continue to make the same mistakes. And that means following through and building on the commitments contained in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect our rights and engage us fully in discussions of issues affecting us.

Canada offers a promising example. Last November, the government of British Columbia enacted legislation to implement the UN declaration, enshrining our rights to our lands and waters, our resources, and our self-determination. It is now required in the province to move toward consent-based decision-making and further collaborate with indigenous peoples on any legislative or policy changes that affect our rights. The federal government is set to replicate this legislation at the national level at the end of this year.

More countries should follow this example, enshrining in legal frameworks the rights of indigenous peoples to govern our own territories and practice our knowledge. This means recognizing our governments and laws, which are essential to ensure that our knowledge is transmitted through generations for the benefit of biodiversity.

It also means repealing racist laws designed to oppress indigenous peoples. Such protections will go a long way toward strengthening our communities' resilience and defending the ecosystems we have long protected—sometimes with our lives.

But, if we are truly to protect biodiversity, this approach must also be reflected at the international level. The parties to the CBD will be meeting, either online or in person, next May to finalize a global biodiversity framework for the next decade and beyond. This will determine the fate of the world's remaining biodiversity—80 percent of which is protected by indigenous peoples.

Rather than relegate us, yet again, to observer status, the meeting's chairs, with the support of the parties, must allow indigenous peoples to make written submissions that, unless openly opposed by a party, will be included in UN documents. We are the original stewards and guardians of this planet. We know how to protect it. It is time for world leaders to listen to us.
Project Syndicate

Terry Teegee, a member of Takla Lake First Nation, is the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations regional chief and a former registered professional forester.



Ex-DFA chief Del Rosario backs China energy deal if it follows law

Published October 17, 2020 5:19pm

By [MICHAELA DEL CALLAR/](#)

Former Foreign Secretary Albert Del Rosario, a fierce China critic, said he supports a possible joint exploration deal with Beijing in the West Philippine Sea as long as the country's laws are followed.

Del Rosario made the statement after President Rodrigo Duterte approved the lifting of the moratorium on oil exploration in the country's waters, including the Reed Bank, which China claims as part of its territory.

Duterte's decision, Del Rosario said, is "a constructive move."

"For as long as we pursue activities with China that is in accordance with Philippine law, this would be a step in the right direction towards a peaceful settlement of disputes," he said.

Del Rosario, who led the Philippines' arbitral tribunal victory against China in 2016, previously suggested a service contract arrangement, where a Chinese company participates either as an equity holder or a subcontractor.

This way, he said, the President "would remain faithful to the Constitution and the arbitral ruling."

The Philippines and China are currently hammering out a deal to explore energy resources in still undetermined areas off the western Philippines.

The Reed Bank, which is within the country's exclusive economic zone or EEZ as declared by an international tribunal, is said to be among the areas being considered for exploration and development.

The bank is vital to Philippine national interest as it is the only replacement for Malampaya, which supplies 40 percent of the energy requirement of Luzon.

Philippine officials have warned that Malampaya will run out of gas in less than 10 years unless the Philippines develops the Reed Bank. — **DVM, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/760305/ex-dfa-chief-del-rosario-backs-china-energy-deal-if-it-follows-law/story/>



5.4-magnitude na lindol, yumanig sa Occidental Mindoro, ilang lugar sa Metro Manila

ni [Lolet Abania](#) | October 17, 2020



Niyang ng 5.4-magnitude na lindol ang bahaging silangan ng Occidental Mindoro ngayong Sabado nang madaling-araw, ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Naramdaman ang paggalaw ng lupa bandang alas-4:06 ng umaga na nasa 21 kilometro hilagang-silangan ng lalawigan ng Looc sa Occidental Mindoro. Gayundin, naitalang tectonic in origin ang pagyanig at may 33-kilometro ang lalim.

Sa ipinalabas na inisyal na report ng Phivolcs, 5.2-magnitude unang naitala ang lindol subali't nagkaroon ng rebisyon na 5.4-magnitude.

Ang lindol ay naramdaman sa iba't ibang lugar sa bansa sa mga sumusunod na Instrumental Intensity:

*Intensity IV - Calatagan, Batangas; Tagaytay City, Cavite; Abra de Ilog, Occidental Mindoro
Intensity III - Carmona, Cavite; Marilao, Bulacan, Talisay, Batangas; Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro; Muntinlupa City; Makati City; Quezon City
Intensity II - Plaridel, Malolos City, Calumpit, at San Rafael, Bulacan; Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro; Bacoar City; Marikina City; Malabon City; Las Pinas City; Meycauayan City, Bulacan; Floridablanca, Pampanga.*

Wala namang nasirang ari-arian at nasaktan matapos ang lindol. Pinapayuhan ang lahat na maging mapagmatyag at mag-ingat sa posibleng mga paglindol.

Patuloy ang pagmomonitor ng Phivolcs sa pagyanig matapos maitalang walong aftershocks sa lugar.

Source: <https://www.bulgaronline.com/post/5-4-magnitude-na-lindol-yumanig-sa-oriental-mindoro-ilang-lugar-sa-metro-manila>



Hope lies in unity

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday promised to give priority to the needs of developing countries, among them the ASEAN members.

Published 4 hours ago on October 18, 2020 01:50 AM

By [Concept News Central](#)



Two months since the first signal of a COVID-19 outbreak emerged from China, foreign ministers and secretaries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have committed to a joint ASEAN-China emergency response to the pandemic, with hopes of averting a virus which has shown no signs of ceasing.

It was on 20 February when leaders of these countries, along with their health sector officials, organized video conferences and committed to face the new coronavirus head-on.

Aside from China, also included in the loop are Japan and South Korea, which formed the ASEAN Plus Three framework, to exchange information and best practices on epidemic prevention and control, diagnosis and treatment.

It was expected to become a widescale fight against the unseen enemy, which included their foreign affairs, transport, finance, information, defense and immigration officials for a cross-sectoral coordinated approach among these countries, which met the early stages of the outbreak with disjointed and uneven responses.

Results of their initial reactions against the pandemic were mixed.

Singapore and Vietnam swiftly took actions with extensive contact tracing, clear and constant public communication, and locally developed test kits for early containment. These have given Singapore and Vietnam impressive initial victories, while the rest have encountered hard times to contain the spread of the virus.

These two countries were the first to implement travel bans and dispatched medical supplies before the need came.

Laos and Timor Leste have the least COVID-19 infections with 23 and 29 victims, according to data from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a US think-tank.



Cambodia, despite Prime Minister Hun Sen downplaying the health issue, has 283 victims. So far.

After an initial success, Singapore had seen a second wave and now has 57,901 COVID-19 victims.

Cambodia, despite Prime Minister Hun Sen downplaying the health issue, has 283 victims. So far.

After an initial success, Singapore had seen a second wave and now has 57,901 COVID-19 victims.

Vietnam has 1,124 with no additional infection. The country's recent daily infection records showed single-digit marks, with zero on Friday.

Thailand, which at present is beset with protests against its political leaders, has seen just 3,669 infections.

Indonesia has the most COVID-19 victims with 353,461. Much of the blame was placed on Indonesian President Joko Widodo's head for his transparency and inadequate appreciation of the enormity of the problem that lulled Indonesia into complacency until the call was issued by the ASEAN Plus Three before March.

It is now paying the price with 12,347 deaths and only 2,479,922 tests conducted.

While the Philippines has the second highest number of infections with 351,750 before the weekend, the number of COVID-19 deaths are only half of that of Indonesia at 6,531.

The country has tested double that of its bigger ASEAN neighbor with 4,305,171 tests conducted.

Still, the participant countries could not yet claim victory over the virus.

The scourge remains until a vaccine is ready for distribution.

President Rodrigo Duterte is close to begging the countries which have come nearer the full development of vaccines.

He has been knocking on the doors of the United States, Russia and China — the Philippines' biggest allies — for the vaccines which are not yet there.

The Philippines does not have the money to buy all the vaccines it needs, too. But that can be answered in many ways.

Its hope now rests on the willingness of the three countries to provide us with the inoculation once it's ready.

Let us not forget, too, that there are 195 countries vying for the delivery of these medicines, which have yet to go on full production.

The latest we can cling on to is China's vow to provide the Philippines with vaccines "within its capacity."

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday promised to give priority to the needs of developing countries, among them the ASEAN members.



This was after he held talks last week with Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the Indonesian president's special envoy, and Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. in Yunnan Province. He also went to Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand and Singapore to make the same assurance.

That's how close — or far — we are in this fight against COVID-19. But there's hope, at least.

It is during these times that we set aside conflicts and work together for mankind.