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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR continues to champion Duterte's 'freedom of information' policy

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by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) proved once again that is a top follower of the Duterte administration's "freedom of information" policy.



(MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

This, after the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) recognized DENR as one of the "Top Requested and Performing Agencies" in the 2020 Freedom of Information (FOI) Awards.

Numbers from the DENR's Records Management Division showed that the agency has successfully processed 250 to 499 requests from the public with at least 90 percent closed transactions in the eFOI portal.

The DENR also received the same award in 2019. "I laud the DENR FOI group behind these two consecutive-year successes. Once again, the DENR adhered to the call for transparency and full disclosure of information which is the right of every Filipino people," DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said in a statement Wednesday, March 10.

The DENR's FOI Committee was created in 2017 to oversee and ensure the effective implementation of Executive Order (EO) No. 2 issued by President Duterte in 2016. The committee is composed of representatives from the various offices and bureaus of the agency.

EO 2 pertains to "operationalizing in the Executive Branch the people's constitutional right to information and the State policies to full public disclosure and transparency in the public service and providing guidelines therefor."

Through the eFOI electronic platform, Filipino citizens can request online any information about government transactions and operations, and official and public records, among others provided that it shall not put into jeopardy privacy and matters of national security.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/10/denr-continues-to-champion-dutertes-freedom-of-information-policy/>



DENR pushes for at-source segregation through local ordinances

By DENR Published on March 10, 2021



QUEZON CITY, Mar. 10 -- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has urged local government units (LGUs) to pass ordinances that will direct barangays to implement waste segregation at source.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and LGUs Concerns Benny D. Antiporda said cities and municipalities nationwide should focus on waste segregation at source for the effective collection and disposal of solid waste.

Antiporda echoed his call for efficient and effective handling of solid waste during a dialogue with Cavite's provincial, city, and municipal environment officers, organized by environmental health group EcoWaste Coalition on March 3.

"Propose to your local council to create an ordinance that will act on those who do not practice segregation in their barangays," Antiporda said.

"It is already stated in RA (Republic Act) 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000), but let us strengthen it with the help of your council," he added.

Antiporda, who is also the alternate chair of the National Solid Waste Management Commission, recommended the creation of inter-barangay enforcement group or designation of "environmental marshals" in every barangay within a city/municipality to monitor solid waste management practices in neighboring barangays.

He also encouraged the Cavite LGU representatives to discuss with their respective local chief executives to allocate funds to address problems on the collection of biodegradable and residual waste.

"Kindly tell your mayors to allocate funds for biodegradable and residual wastes," Antiporda said.

Data from the Provincial Government – Environment and Natural Resources Office of Cavite shows that 58.78 percent of the waste generated in the province are biodegradable, while 28.19 percent are residual wastes.



During the meeting, Antiporda also commended the Environment and Natural Resources Offices of Trece Martires City and municipality of General Mariano Alvarez (GMA) for implementing environmental and ecological projects and programs that effectively address city and municipal generated wastes.

He likewise reiterated the commitment of the DENR to provide technical and financial assistance to the LGUs on their solid waste management programs to ensure the effective implementation of solid waste management in the country. (DENR)



Waste segregation kada barangay hinirit

By Abante News Online — Last updated Mar 10, 2021

NEWS



Photo courtesy of en.wikipedia.org



IMINUMUNGKAHI ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa local government units (LGUs) na magpasa ng isang ordinansa na nag-aatas sa mga barangay na ipatupad ang waste segregation.

Ayon kay DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and LGUs Concerns Benny Antiporda, dapat tutukan ng mga lungsod at munisipalidad sa buong bansa ang waste segregation mula sa pinanggalingan nito o waste segregation at source para maging epektibo ang pagkolekta at pagtapon sa mga basura.

Muling nanawagan si Antiporda na maging epektibo ang pangangasiwa sa solid waste sa isang dayalogo sa pagitan ng Cavite provincial, city at municipal environment officers na inorganisa ng EcoWaste Coalition noong Marso 3.

“Propose to your local council to create an ordinance that will act on those who do not practice segregation in their barangays,” ani Antiporda. (Riz Dominguez)



Women empowerment key to addressing climate, health crisis—DENR

By DENR Published on March 10, 2021

QUEZON CITY, Mar. 10 -- 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 kick-off ceremony in 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 that 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.

"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," 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," Teh said.



"I urge all our DENR offices, at the Central Office, bureaus, attached agencies, regional, provincial, and community offices to help us 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.

The National Women's Month is celebrated every March as "Women's Role in History Month" under Proclamation No. 227 s. 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. (DENR)

DENR receives wildlife ambulance from USAID

By U.S. Embassy in the Philippines Published on March 10, 2021



BUTUAN CITY, March 10 -- To mark World Wildlife Day and strengthen the Philippine government's wildlife rescue and rehabilitation efforts, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) turned over on March 2 a new wildlife ambulance to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

This turnover was part of USAID's P1.2-billion Protect Wildlife Project.

The wildlife ambulance which is the first of its kind in the country will help the DENR's National Wildlife Rescue and Research Center improve its response time during wildlife rescue and retrieval, as well as facilitate the provision of immediate on-site care for injured and trafficked wildlife.

The specially designed vehicle has furnished cabinets for veterinary and wildlife handling equipment, a collapsible veterinary examination table and seats, and a roof rack for transporting animal crates, ladders, and other equipment for wildlife rescue.



USAID also handed over WILDBase, a centralized online system for recording and monitoring rescued wildlife. WILDBase will help rescue centers keep track of wildlife in their care, as well as medical records, inventory, and other important information for rescue center operations and decision-making.

DENR Undersecretary Ernesto Adobo, Jr. received the wildlife ambulance and WILDBase from USAID Philippines Environment Office Deputy Director Paul Seong during a turnover ceremony held at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center.

"We appreciate USAID's continued generosity to the DENR through the years. The enforcement of our wildlife laws, rules, and regulations do not end with the confiscation of the wildlife and the prosecution of the violators," said Usec. Adobo.



He furthered that with this new ambulance, WILDBase, and newest equipment and materials, they can more easily treat and monitor the health of confiscated wildlife.

“This ambulance and online system complete USAID’s program of assistance for the DENR’s National Wildlife Rescue and Research Center, and complements the Center’s new wildlife diagnostics equipment, wildlife handling tools, and digital innovations,” said Seong.

Since 2016, the Protect Wildlife project has helped protect 750,000 hectares of diverse landscapes and seascapes, trained 2,300 men and women in improved environmental enforcement practices, and brought economic and environmental benefits to 95,000 Filipinos through environmentally sustainable livelihoods, community-based enforcement, and sustainably managed natural resources. (U.S. Embassy in the Philippines/PIA-Caraga)



Cleanup of polluted waters of Manila Bay under way

March 10, 2021 | Filed under: [Editorial, Opinion](#) | Posted by: [Tempo Desk](#)

AFTER Secretary Roy Cimatu of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources cleaned up Boracay after five months in 2018, President Duterte told him to clean up Manila Bay next. The secretary looked at the problem posed by Manila Bay, so many times bigger than Boracay, and told the President it would take over 10 years to accomplish the task of cleaning up the bay.

The pollution in the bay is the result of decades of neglect, starting with the millions of homes built along the streams and rivers that joined the Pasig as it flowed to Manila Bay. These millions of households poured their household wastes and their human sewage directly into the streams and into the Pasig river. Today, the waters of Manila Bay are deemed unfit for human contact.

In 2008, the Supreme Court, acting on a petition filed by the Concerned Citizens of Manila Bay, ordered the DENR and other government agencies to clean up the bay in ten years.



There are two concessioners supplying water to Metro Manila – Maynilad, serving the West Zone of the Greater Manila Area – portions of Manila, portions of Quezon City, portions of Makati, and Caloocan, Pasay, Paranaque, Las Pinas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, and Malabon. Manila Water serves the East Zone – Mandaluyong, Makati, Pasig, Pateros San Juan, Taguig, Marikina, parts of Manila and Quezon City, several towns of Rizal.

Last month, Manila Water announced that it had started the construction of its 2nd sewage treatment plant at a cost of P4.2 billion. The plant is expected to be completed in 2024. Full sewer and sanitation coverage is expected by 2037.

Maynilad also announced last month that three new treatment plants, built at a cost of P7.15 billion, are due for completion this year. Maynilad now has a total of 22 wastewater facilities. Full sewerage and sanitation coverage should be 100 percent by 2037.

The year 2037 is still a long way off in the future – 16 years. But after all these decades of suffering the pollution of the bay, we can wait a few more years to see a finally clean Manila Bay, worthy of being listed among the world's most beautiful waters in the world today.

Source: <http://www.tempo.com.ph/2021/03/10/cleanup-of-polluted-waters-of-manila-bay-under-way/>



SMC to start cleanup of Pasig River in April

By [JONATHAN L. MAYUGA](#) MARCH 9, 2021



Aerial view of Manila with the Pasig River
Image credits: [Namhwi Kim | Dreamstime.com](#)

San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said it is now gearing up to clean and to widen the Pasig River, a heavily-silted and polluted water body but is still considered an economically and ecologically important river in Metro Manila.

The 25.2-kilometer river connects Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay. It once served as an important passenger and commercial route in and out of Manila, the country's capital city.

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Over the years, the degradation of the Pasig River, including its siltation, reduced its capacity to absorb and channel water during heavy and excessive rains, causing flooding in low-lying areas.

The government, through the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) claims to have significantly improved the physical condition of the river since serious rehabilitation work started in the early 1990s.

In a statement, SMC said with the arrival of 2 dredging equipment which is capable of pulling 600,000 tons of silt and solid waste out of Pasig River per year, the company targets to begin rehabilitation work next month, and will go on for the next 5 years.

“Through the years, Pasig River has become narrower and shallower because of accumulated silt and waste. By cleaning and widening it, we will be able to increase its capacity to keep water flowing within its banks especially during heavy rains,” SMC President Ramon S. Ang said.

Ads by [optAd360](#)

SMC, together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and other concerned government units, is targeting to extract 50,000 tons of waste per month from the river.

Proponents of the project said they have identified sections where the depth of water has been reduced to as little as one meter which will be the priority of the dredging and widening operation.

“After a thorough assessment of Pasig River, we identified sections where the depth of water has been reduced to as little as one meter. These are the most critical portions of the river that cause widespread flooding,” Ang said.

For the Pasig River to effectively serve its purpose of channeling flood waters out to the Manila Bay, its depth should at least be 10 meters. “But garbage and silt over the many decades have reduced this to just one meter in these areas, clogging the river and causing water to overflow everywhere.”

Currently, SMC is already undertaking a major river cleanup—its 5-year, P1 billion corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative to dredge and clean up the 27-kilometer Tullahan-Tinajeros River System, which benefits other flood-prone areas, such as Malabon and Navotas.



Launched in early 2020, with work only fully commencing following the lifting of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), the project is seen to help solve flooding in Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, Caloocan, Quezon City, as well as Bulacan province, for the longterm.

At the end of 2020, SMC reported it extracted a total of 83,600 metric tons of garbage and silt from the section of the river located in Malabon and Navotas. SMC has since committed to put in more resources and acquire more heavy machinery for the effort.

During the series of typhoons that hit Luzon and Metro Manila towards the end 2020, both flood-prone cities reported no major flooding incidents despite increased water volume. This is largely seen as the combined result of having effective pumping stations and the ongoing Tullahan cleanup by SMC.

Ads by optAd360

“We have had considerable experience in cleaning up rivers, primarily because of Tullahan, and also our successful initiatives to clean up rivers below Skyway 3. [We] are even putting in more resources and buying more equipment for the Tullahan initiative. We are also looking to do this for rivers in Bulacan. Naturally, cleaning up the Pasig River is a big goal that we do not take lightly,” Ang said.

“There have been many noteworthy efforts that have been initiated in the past, in order to rehabilitate the Pasig River. Unfortunately, it has always been a very costly undertaking. Now that San Miguel has a chance to help, we will give it our all.”

Image credits: [Namhwi Kim | Dreamstime.com](#)



Watershed advocates form group in Vizcaya

posted March 10, 2021 at 11:05 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya—As they embark to meet the multi-stakeholder Watershed Management Council of this province today, 35 people's organizations held a workshop to craft a collective vision and strategic goals for their federation.

The federation, which is present in eight sub-watersheds draining to the Upper Magat River, was named Watershed Development Advocates or WADA.

Both the DENR and the Provincial Government of Nueva Vizcaya have pushed for the establishment and empowerment of the WMC since 2018.

Ansel Cabrera, institutional development specialist at the central project management office of the Forestland Management Project of the DENR, facilitated the two-day workshop held Tuesday and Wednesday here.

"The focus of FMP's remaining years is to improve livelihood and enterprise development among these POs," Cabrera said.

Cabrera said only a stable income from agroforestry plantations would enable upland communities to protect the country's remaining source of water.

POs partnered with the FMP were provided funding for the development of plantations and agro-forestry sites, construction of support facilities (such as roads, bridges, and irrigation), and establishing sustainable community enterprises.

POs are also encouraged to train paralegals to help in the enforcement of forest protection laws.



In Pangasinan, garbage woes loom after dump closure

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:35 AM March 10, 2021



TRASH PILE In this file photo, a worker at Urdaneta City Sanitary Landfill uses a backhoe to clear a trash pile where newly delivered garbage from different towns in Pangasinan will be dumped. —WILLIE LOMIBAO

DAGUPAN CITY—Most local governments in Pangasinan province are scrambling to find a landfill for their solid waste after the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) closed the Urdaneta City engineered sanitary landfill last week. The EMB has also barred residents of Urdaneta City from using the 18-hectare property, which has exceeded its capacity, said Maximino Soriano Jr., Pangasinan environment and natural resources officer.

At least 19 towns and this city use the Urdaneta sanitary landfill that was built in 2011 in Barangay Catablan.

The dump, operated by a private company, can accommodate 40 tons of compacted garbage daily. In 2019, it received 18,467 tons of garbage, according to a local government audit that year.

In January this year, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) inspected the site and issued two cease-and-desist orders for violations of the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (Republic Act No. 9275) and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (Republic Act No. 9003).

Assessment

The landfill's management was given until the end of February to address violations, like faulty drainage system and pollution concerns, but the company failed to meet the deadline. "The landfill accepts all kinds of garbage, whether these are biodegradable or nonbiodegradable, which are not separated in trucks," said a former environment officer in the province. Vladimir Mata, Dagupan City administrator, said the local government had not transacted directly with the Urdaneta landfill operator.

Mata said they were dealing with a local contractor, which would haul the city's garbage to another landfill in Tarlac City now that the Urdaneta dump had been closed.

The DENR cited the landfill's inadequate drainage system, which is connected to the leachate (dirty or contaminated liquid from piles of garbage) pond, as one of the reasons for closing the dump.



An assessment of the DENR's pollution adjudication board showed that the landfill's storm drainage also contained leachate.

The board said it received complaints about the stench from the dump, and tests on water samples showed that these failed the DENR's standards on water quality for sanitary landfills. Antonio Estrada, head of EMB's environmental monitoring and enforcement division in the Ilocos region, said the pile of trash in the landfill had reached as high as a four-story building or at least 12 meters (40 feet).

Estrada said the closure was in line with the order of Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to close all dumps violating environmental regulations by the end of this month.

—YOLANDA SOTELO INQ



Keep safe, wear a mask; and then what?

[Doreen G. Yu](#) (The Philippine Star) - March 11, 2021 - 12:00am

Masking started in January 2020 when Taal Volcano erupted and ash drifted far and wide, causing breathing and respiratory problems. Boxes of surgical masks purchased wholesale from Bambang in Sta. Cruz were included in the relief packs sent to evacuation centers in Batangas and Laguna. What used to cost P1.50 apiece went up to P3, then P5.

Then that minuscule critter of a coronavirus came to our shores, and masking became a matter of life and death. Surgical face masks became the most sought after and the rarest of commodities. Stocks in drugstores sold out even before they reached the shelves. Limits were set on purchases of masks – along with alcohol and toilet paper.

My sister-in-law works for a company that brought in machines from China to make surgical masks. My barkada and I pooled our orders so we could purchase wholesale; each one ordered for her immediate family, extended family, the neighbor's family, workers at the son's factory... At P625 to P750 per box of 50 masks (or P12.50 to P15 per piece) it was suki price – may utang na loob pa for priority delivery – considering others were selling for as much as P1,800 per box (or P36 each). The hoards were tucked away securely in cabinets – perhaps even under lock and key.

Here we are a year later, and you can get a box for as low as P50, or P1 per mask. There are now all kinds of alternatives to the boring blue disposable mask – they come beaded, embroidered, masks with company or group logos, sayings or pictures, designer masks, social enterprise masks from communities in Marawi, Tacloban, Ilocos... But the disposable mask is still most widely used, perhaps because it is so cheap.

We now even double mask; a recent study in Japan supposedly showed double masking doesn't really offer that much added protection, but hey, better double than sorry, right?

We Filipinos are generally good about following protocols like wearing masks and shields (even if many people have the mask on the chin and the shield atop the head), although a friend rightfully pointed out as we drove to Tagaytay recently that the farther away from the metro we went, the less we saw folks wearing masks. And that brings us to the “and then what?” part – what happens to all these disposable masks after we use them?

Sadly, these masks end up all around us, carelessly thrown away. They end up in gutters, on sidewalks, in the bushes, in garbage piles by the sides of roads, in unsegregated trash in landfills and in our waters – divers are increasingly finding them in our bays and seas, among the coral in our reefs, along beaches and coastlines, in canals and rivers.

Masks – along with gloves and PPEs – are medical waste, and thus should be segregated and not simply thrown into the garbage can along with other household or office waste in the common “di nabubulok” receptacle.



We do have RA 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act) and RA 6969 (Toxic Substance and Hazardous and Nuclear Waste Control Act) but implementation falls quite short.

Hospitals have the “yellow bin” where such medical wastes are discarded for proper treatment and disposal. Households and offices should have such a receptacle too, not necessarily yellow, but one specific for such waste. At home I have a plastic bag where members of my household put their used masks, and when these accumulate I tie up the plastic bag before throwing it out.

A report by the Asian Development Bank estimated hospitals in Metro Manila generating 280 tons of medical waste per day since the start of the pandemic. According to an article in the ACS Environmental Science and Technology journal, globally up to 129 billion disposable face masks are used each month. The UN Conference on Trade and Development estimated global sales of disposable masks reached \$166 billion last year.

Those are staggering numbers, and with the pandemic unfortunately staying with us for the near future – even with vaccines – masks will continue to be used – and thrown away.

We have to start being responsible about disposing of masks as we are being responsible about using them. Unfortunately, “there is no safe way to dispose of single-use face masks,” according to Amanda Keetley, founder of Less Plastic, in an article in the Independent.

So let us heed the experts who are more and more recommending the use of cloth or washable/reusable face masks, and leaving the surgical masks to health workers. Make your mask a statement for your health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of our family, our community, our nation and our world.



Govt must prioritize water

By [The Manila Times](#)

March 11, 2021

THE month of March is designated every year as World Water Month, which culminates in activities in observance of World Water Day on March 22. Our government, of course, along with civil society groups and other environmental and social advocates, cheerfully participates in appropriate festivities for the occasion, reinforcing the message that reliable supply of clean, healthy water is a universal human right.

However, even a casual comparison of the rhetoric and actual policy action reveals that there is much to be desired in the government's approach to fulfilling its responsibility to ensure water for all Filipinos. Water is a critical requirement at any time but is perhaps even more important now as we continue to wrestle with the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

The importance of water in the effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19 is quite simple but cannot be overstated. Of all the various health safety measures that we have by now become accustomed to practicing, medical experts have repeatedly emphasized that proper handwashing is the most effective means to prevent or minimize infections. Not only does this practice help to fight Covid-19, but it can also help to eliminate a whole host of other types of contagious diseases. In order to properly do it, however, clean water must obviously be readily available.

Managing that requirement here in the Philippines has proven more difficult than it should be because, unlike most other countries, we do not have a dedicated, organized ministry or agency to oversee water development and management policy and action. Rather, there are 39 different agencies; some are standalone agencies, such as the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, while others are line agencies, or offices within other Cabinet departments such as the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

This chaotic arrangement has evolved over a number of years without any real regard for a broad, national-level water policy, and it has proven to be inefficient and far less productive than what the country needs. Much of the work being done by water agencies is simply to keep existing systems — which only reach about half of the entire population — from falling apart, rather than making progress in expanding water supplies and distribution.

For example, most of the assistance to local water districts extended by the LWUA, which under acting Administrator Jeci Lopus has been extraordinarily active despite limited resources, is devoted to supporting work to repair and replace aging water supply pipes.

The pipe systems in many parts of the country date all the way back to the American colonial era and are responsible for huge losses due to leakage — what the LWUA calls “nonrevenue water” or NRW — that not only waste water supplies but cause financial losses for the water districts, making it harder for them to maintain their services. The problem is so widespread that it could be considered an epidemic in its own right; neither the LWUA nor any other agency even has reliable data on how much of the water system needs to be replaced, as half-century old construction records are incomplete, and the condition of water lines is usually only reliably determined by digging them up.



The passage of the pending bill that would create a Cabinet-level Department of Water, an idea that we have strongly endorsed recently, would go a long way to solving many of the organizational, planning and policy implementation problems the country now suffers. The LWUA, for its part, has been energetically lobbying for the Department of Water, and its advocacy says something about the right thinking of at least some people in government: If and when the Department of Water is created, there is a very good chance the LWUA would be dissolved and absorbed into the new agency. That, however, is far less important to the people at the LWUA than finding the most effective way to ensure water for all Filipinos.

That perspective is both noble and rare and should be the example of true public service for all the rest of the government to emulate.



No water shortage

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 People's Tonight13



ALTHOUGH heavily-populated Metropolitan Manila (MM) is the country's premier region, it is prone to water scarcity, notably during the dry season from March to May. However, it is certainly heartening to know that Metro Manilans and residents of surrounding provinces are not anticipating such water shortage this summer.

The Angat Dam in Norzagaray, Bulacan will not lack water to supply until April despite the expected below-normal rainfall in the area, according to hydrologist Max Peralta.

Peralta is with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Inaugurated on Oct. 16, 1967, the Angat Dam is a concrete water reservoir embankment hydroelectric dam that supplies Metropolitan Manila and nearby areas with water.

The hydrologist said the dam's water is at a higher level until next month, which can still ably supply for irrigation and power as well as potable water to consumers.

Peralta reported that the Angat Dam's water level on Tuesday was 209.50 meters, higher than the 180 meters minimum operating level (MOL) of the nearly 54-year-old facility.

He said the water level may dip to about 200 meters by the end of this month, but this is still above the MOL, adding that the dam need not depend on rain next month to have water for its customers.

On the other hand, the above-normal rainfall over the watershed in May and June will help Angat replenish its reserve and further enhance its potential to supply water to its customers.

Talagang good news ito sa mga taga-Metropolitan Manila at karatig pook.

Source: <https://journal.com.ph/editorial/opinion/no-water-shortage/>



18 informal settlers receive financial aid

By Annabel Consuelo Petinglay **March 10, 2021, 4:14 pm**



FINANCIAL HELP. Antique Governor Rhodora J. Cadio (2nd from left) leads the distribution of financial assistance to informal settlers affected by the construction of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources office at the Malandog River Rehabilitation and Development Project in Barangay Maybato North in San Jose de Buenavista on Tuesday (March 9, 2021). Provincial Environment and Natural Resources officer Andres Untal (left) and Vice Governor Edgar Denosta (3rd from left) were also present during the distribution of the assistance. *(Photo courtesy of Antique PIO)*

SAN JOSE DE BUENAVISTA, Antique – A total of 18 informal settlers have each received PHP10,000 in financial assistance from the provincial government to be used for their relocation.

“Antique Governor Rhodora J. Cadio led the distribution of the financial assistance to the 18 informal settlers who would be relocating from the reclaimed area in Barangay Maybato North to Barangay Mapatag resettlement site (in San Jose de Buenavista),” provincial government housing board secretary Eby Butiong said in an interview on Wednesday.

Butiong said of the 18 informal settlers, eight have signified that they would like to temporarily live with their relatives until the provincial government provides them with another resettlement site that is near their former residence.

“They found the resettlement site quite far that they opted not to transfer (to) Barangay Mapatag,” he added.

These informal settlers were affected by the ongoing PHP50 million Malandog River Rehabilitation and Development Project (MRRDP), particularly the construction of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) office.

“The informal settlers were given financial assistance by the governor through the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) so that they would have some money to use as they transfer to the resettlement site provided them by the provincial government in Barangay Mapatag,” Butiong said.

The eight who rejected the offer to resettle in Barangay Mapatag were also given the same cash assistance so they would have money for their sustenance.

He said the DENR would put up an office in Barangay Maybato North so that it could closely monitor the coastal area and the MRRDP.

“The informal settlers are expected to relocate from Barangay Maybato North on or before March 22 when the construction of the DENR office starts,” Butiong said. **(PNA)**



Mining firms claim 2 presidential awards

posted March 10, 2021 at 11:45 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

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



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.

Cagdianao Mining Corp., based in Valencia in the Dinagat Islands, and Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. 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, an agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the award is given to operating mines that have shown exemplary performance in 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," said 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 worth of Annual Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program and P47.3 million for the development of CMC's host and neighboring communities through the company's Social Development Management Programs 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, 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," said 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 P66.5 million for AEPEP and P36.2 million 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," Cynthia E. Rosero, RTN's Resident Mine Manager, said.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/349135>



Climate change adversely affects Philippine hardwood trees — study

By: [Jhesset O. Enano](#) - Reporter / [@JhessetEnanoINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 01:15 PM March 10, 2021



Dipterocarp or lowland rainforest trees, such as these in Mt. Makiling in Laguna, are essential, not just for the economical value, but for their ecosystem services and cultural value. Photo courtesy of Ma. Rovelyn D. Tumaneng and Roven D. Tumaneng.

MANILA, Philippines — Climate change adversely affects certain species of Philippine hardwood trees, such as yakal, apitong and tanguile, as the warming planet continues to make particular areas unsuitable for their growth, according to species distribution models created by scientists from the National University of Singapore.

In a study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, the researchers also discovered that the lowland forests suitable for these trees, also known as dipterocarps, fall largely outside the current delineations of the country's protected areas network.

A critical tree family in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia, the dipterocarpaceae has over 600 species of mainly lowland forest trees and is considered a major component of tropical forests in the region.

Researchers looked at the distribution of 19 species of dipterocarps in the Philippines, including the yakal (*Shorea astylosa*), apitong (*Dipterocarpus grandiflorus*), guiyo (*Shorea guiso*), hagakhak (*Dipterocarpus validus*) and white lauan (*Shorea contorta*). Many of these trees are already considered vulnerable, while some are critically endangered.

Using species distribution models, the scientists mapped the existing dipterocarp species across the country. Results showed that land cover correction, or correcting the maps to show areas suitable for the growth of the trees, has already reduced their distribution by a median of 67 percent. Those within protected areas, which are enshrined under a law, decreased by 37 percent.

Some of the greatest losses, the study noted, were in Southern Luzon and Northern Visayas.

Hostile environment

Lead author Sean Pang said that while deforestation and land use has already decimated a great number of these trees, this situation can be further worsened by rising temperatures that are not suitable for their survival.

“Whatever is left, they will be put under a lot of pressure because of climate change,” he said in an interview with *Inquirer*. “A lot of places where the dipterocarps are will be quite inhospitable for them in the future.”



While certain existing locations will remain suitable, some trees may shift to higher elevations where the temperatures are not as hostile for their growth, said Jose Don de Alban, the report's coauthor.

“

“Whatever is left, they will be put under a lot of pressure because of climate change,” he said in an interview with Inquirer. “A lot of places where the dipterocarps are will be quite inhospitable for them in the future.”

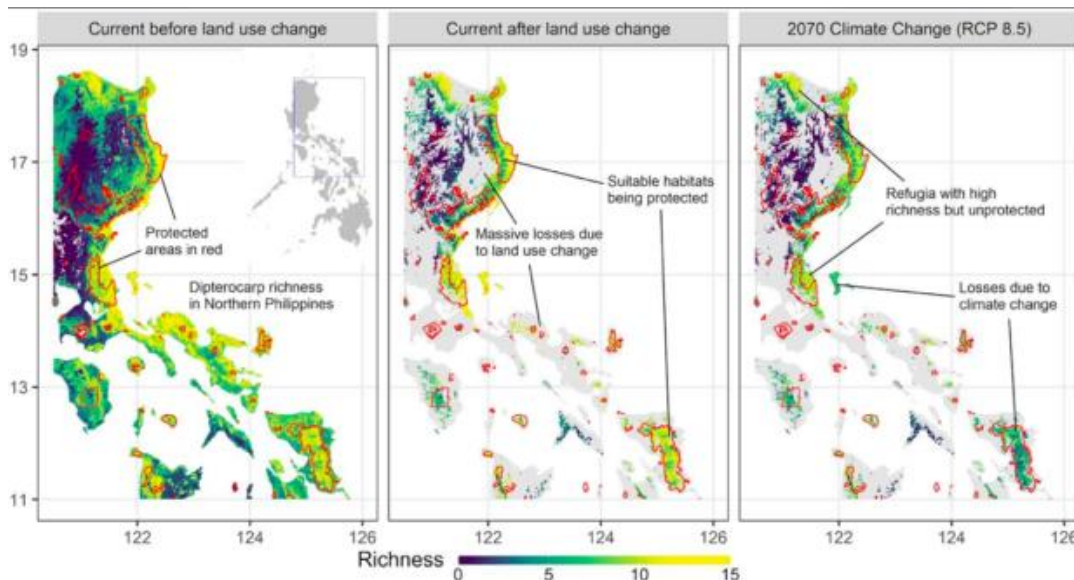
”

As the planet warms, he said, these lowland trees may soon start moving up to higher elevations, such as on mountaintops. These areas, however, are already home to different species of trees.

“The space on the top of the mountain is smaller, and so as they go up, the space that they occupy is smaller,” Alban said.

Gap in PH protected areas

The study also highlighted a “critical gap” in the Philippines’ protected area system, which scientists discovered only covers a relatively small portion of suitable habitats for dipterocarps at present. Similarly, they also have low coverage of areas for these trees under climate change scenarios.



Species distribution models created by scientists from the National University of Singapore showed huge losses of dipterocarp ranges due to deforestation. Much of the most species-rich areas projected by 2070 are also outside the current protected areas network in the Philippines. Maps courtesy of Jose Don de Alban.

“Areas of high dipterocarp richness that were left unprotected included the lowlands of northern and southern Sierra Madre and Cordillera mountain ranges for the Greater Luzon region,” the study said.

Pang said that the study highlights the many opportunities for the Philippines to expand its current protected areas network to include areas that are suitable for the growth of lowland trees.



Their report, said Alban, could help inform current and future conservation efforts, since any changes in the species will have cascading effects on forest habitats and wildlife.

As hardwood trees, dipterocarps are often used for timber. Beyond their economical services, however, they also serve as habitat for wild animals and are integral part of watersheds, said Edward Webb, the research's principal investigator.

“They also have cultural value for the countries they are endemic in,” he added.

With remaining forests only covering around 20 percent of the country's total area, Alban said much has to be done to conserve them.

“If we lose what's left, it will take time for these forests to go back,” he said.

EDV



We Need To Act On Our Climate Commitments – Now



By [Featuresdesk \(MD\)](#)

March 10, 2021

A document draft outlines the Philippines' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – our commitments to combating climate change and environmental degradation. The draft indicates a 75% target decrease in emissions. We welcome this ambitious goal – but in the fine details, it is not enough, with only a 2.71% emission cutback hardcoded into our plans. We need to achieve that 75%. We need to meet the commitments we've set down on paper, and we need to start working towards them today.

The United Nations have dubbed the 2020s as the Decade of Action. Yet we're running short on time, with under nine years left and not a single Sustainable Development Goal met. The Decade of Action is a call for all nations of the world to deliver on the SDGs. Part and parcel of these goals is climate action, and by the year 2030, should certain reduction milestones not be met, we will be right on the path toward terrible climate catastrophe.



In response to the Decade of Action and central to the Paris Agreement, each nation has its own NDCs. The NDCs are both a plan and a sign of commitment. Each one states reductions that a nation plans to make to its carbon footprint while outlining steps and actions to be taken towards realizing those goals. Every five years a global stocktake is held, where each nation's NDCs are examined against meeting the Paris Agreement objectives. Here, big goals and good plans shine bright.

Our own NDC, as per the latest draft, pushes for a carbon emissions reduction and avoidance of 75% from 2020 to 2030 for the sectors of agriculture, wastes, industry, transport, and energy. The draft even includes an aspirational target of peaking emissions by 2030 as the country moves to accelerate the attainment of its sustainable development goals and the just transition of all sectors into a green economy. But only 2.71% of that target is unconditional, which is to say, set in stone in the governments' plans and will be undertaken in any case. While the lead sectoral agencies such as the Climate Change Commission, the Department of Energy, the Department of Finance, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Interior and Local Governments have made serious positive developments in advancing climate action, much still needs to be done. The remaining 72.29% of the proposed NDC target is dependent on external and internal mechanisms, and though some government policies and measures are included, these have only been included conditionally in the draft NDC. This, we find, needs work.

In setting a low unconditional commitment, despite the bold climate ambition, we are sending a mixed message that climate action is not a priority for our nation. For a country heavily reliant on natural resources and highly vulnerable to environmental risks, this is not a good message for us to be sending. Millions of Filipinos live by the sea – they will be displaced as sea levels rise. Millions rely on coastal resources, and millions more on the fruits of our farms – all these, too, are under threat. The threats our country faces today are so grave as to be existential, and nothing less than utmost priority and commitment to the environment is what is needed now.



We at WWF-Philippines are calling on the government to increase its 2% unconditional commitment. In increasing our unconditional commitment, we send a better signal both across the country and overseas that we are giving utmost priority to the fight against climate change and environmental degradation. That is what we need now – to stand firm in ensuring the futures of all Filipinos.

But what can we do to achieve these ambitious commitments? In truth, the government has set down the groundwork that should help us reach our goals. We can use that groundwork as a staging point for our climate actions.

We can start, first, by situating the environment in our national development plans. Important as the broad commitments may be, the fine details should incorporate the protection of habitats and natural resources if we truly want a sustainable future for our country. As we speak for nature, projects that promote emission reductions should also incorporate local voices, and must not cause additional harm to communities and to nature.



The World Wide Fund for Nature has a checklist of criteria that ought to be entrenched in our NDC plans. There are twenty criteria, which you can check out in detail [here](#), but there are five broad categories: ambition (in mitigation, adaptation, and finance); fostering systemic change; inclusiveness and participation; contribution to sustainable development; and provisions for tracking progress.

There are many existing government plans where NDC and environmental considerations must be included. Ambisyon 2040, for example, details the goals our country is working towards over the next two decades, while the National Renewable Energy Plan is working toward a future that is 35% powered by renewables by 2030. It is important, now, for us to sit down and to examine these plans in light of changing climates and degrading environments and with respect for local and indigenous communities if we are to be prosperous well into the future. Our NDC must be incorporated in the country's plans for green recovery as a systemic transition should already be set in motion.

Environmental considerations should be interwoven throughout all parts of the plans, as opposed to being siloed and treated as independent.



Secondly, we must make sure that our plans for achieving the NDC are outlined, transparent, and democratic. Achieving the NDC goals is a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder task. For us to achieve them, they must be drafted in such a way that it is quick and easy for agencies, businesses, local governments, and civil society to incorporate them into their plans and business models. The roles of businesses and local governments in meeting our NDCs should also be made clear, to spur them toward taking climate action, and to help enable our national plans. The best plans are born from local knowledge and capacities, too – therefore our NDCs must be crafted to allow democracy to thrive and to dictate their direction.



Thirdly, we must prioritize our complete transition towards a green economy. The pandemic has proven the need for us to rethink the way society has been designed. Extractive industries have exposed us to all sorts of environmental risks, from storms to worldwide pandemics, and there is a need for us to properly structure our economy around the environment. Adopting science-based targets and strategies for nature and climate should be employed to guide economic recovery investment and spending decisions. Launching green jobs, expanding sustainable mobility options and rolling out environmental financing initiatives that support green and just transition efforts, among others, will help us safeguard our natural resources and, in turn, our well-being without sacrificing the economy.

Lastly, we need the collaboration of all sectors of Philippine society to help realize our national commitments. The Nationally Determined Contributions are exactly that – national commitments. Local governments, businesses, and even individual Filipinos then have a responsibility toward realizing these commitments. At the end of the day, all Filipinos will feel the effects of a changing planet – so, too, should all Filipinos be committed to safeguarding our nation.

This is not a reprimand of what our government has committed to. Again, we welcome this goal to cut back on our emissions by 75% but we ask to remove the conditions that would become tomorrow's excuses for failing in our commitment. We encourage everyone – the government, both national and local, businesses both big and small, individuals from all walks of life – to help us take our commitments even further and to act upon them. This is not for posterity, not for the sake of building a legacy for the Philippine nation, but for ensuring the survival of each and every Filipino. This is the battle for all of our lives and all lives to come, and we're running out of time.



Climate change: When 'net zero' is not zero

By [RENE E. OFRENEO](#)
MARCH 11, 2021



The Paris Agreement of 2015 (PA 2015) seeks to prevent a climate Armageddon: global temperature rising at a level that makes life on Planet Earth unsustainable. The global target: limit rise in global warming to 1.5-degree Celsius above pre-industrial era.

To achieve the above PA 2015 goal, climate scientists are calling for a rapid transition of economies from fossil fuels, the single biggest source of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions, to renewable energy. Studies of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the UN Environment Programme indicate that the use of coal, oil and gas needs to drop by 78 percent, 37 percent and 25 percent, respectively, by 2030 compared to 2010 levels in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius. According to the 2020 UNEP Production Gap report, between 2020 and 2030, global coal, oil, and gas production would have to decline annually by 11 percent, 4 percent, and 3 percent, respectively, to be consistent with a 1.5 degree Celsius pathway.

Ads by [optAd360](#)

Clearly, the challenge is for governments around the world to summon the will to retire the use of fossil fuel by phasing out facilities dependent on coal, oil and gas, and banning the establishment of new fossil-dependent plants and infrastructures. The problem is that a number of big fossil users, mostly multinational corporations (MNCs) and a few advanced economies, refuse to give up the use of fossil fuel. They keep a business-as-usual (BAU) attitude, meaning irresponsibly maintaining and expanding dirty coal, oil and gas plants.

However, a few fossil users, who are trying to wear a false image of being socially responsible, have found a way of justifying their refusal to phase out dirty plants and facilities. They proclaim that they are "net zero" emitters. How? By buying "carbon credits" or engaging in "carbon offsetting." These carbon credits are secured by sponsoring GHG-catching projects such as tree-planting programs for reforestation or by promoting the establishment of power plants using renewable energy such as wind mills. As a result, these carbon credit buyers/offsetters have succeeded in making the discourses on climate change mitigation and adaptation confusing.

Ads by [optAd360](#)

Now a group of 41 scientists—from different European and Australian academic and research institutes—came up late last year with a statement blasting the myths around "net zero targets and carbon offsetting." Below is a summary of these myths and the position of the climate scientists:

Myth 1—Net zero by 2050 will solve the climate crisis. Scientists' answer: misleading. The challenge is how to make major reductions in emissions now. There is no assurance that net zero targets will deliver "negative emissions," or removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through storage in vegetation, soil and rocks.

Myth 2—Fossil fuel emissions can be compensated by "nature-based solutions" such as carbon sequestration in vegetation and soil. Again misleading. Fossil fuel emission happens immediately, while nature-based solutions take time and sometimes fail (for example, carbon released again by forest fires).

Myth 3—Net zero targets and carbon offsets provide incentives for emission reduction. Misleading. The so-called incentive declines when it becomes financially advantageous and socially acceptable to buy carbon offsets from abroad.



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Myth 4—Carbon offsetting helps developing countries, as hosts of carbon sequestering projects, meet PA 2015 commitment. Misleading. Developing countries also have emission targets to deliver under PA 2015.

Myth 5—Funding renewable energy projects compensates for fossil fuel emissions. Problematic. Host countries have the duty to go renewable; but if renewable projects are used as offsets, they are simply added to the existing energy mix, meaning no overall carbon reduction.

Myth 6—Technological solutions for carbon dioxide removal will solve the problem. Overly optimistic. Yes, there are technologies being developed but they are expensive, energy intensive and still unproven. Hence, it is irresponsible to make net zero assumptions based on uncertain “future technologies.”

Myth 7—Tree plantations capture more carbon than old forests. Misleading. Old forests contain “centuries worth of carbon” and carbon released by felled trees can take a hundred years or more to be recaptured. In short, no time for tree plantations to make up for losses due to deforestation.

Ads by [optAd360](#)

Myth 8—Planting trees in the tropics is win-win for both nature and local communities. Oversimplified. Planting trees by outside investors for the sole purpose of capturing carbon can threaten the rights, cultures and food security of local communities, especially of indigenous people. There are also threats to biodiversity.

Myth 9—Each ton of carbon dioxide is the same and can be treated interchangeably. False. Carbon dioxide removal tomorrow cannot compensate for emissions today. Nor emissions from luxury consumption be the same as emissions from essential food production.

Myth 10—Consumption of marketed products, including travel, can be “climate neutral.” False. Both the consumed products and travel have carbon footprint, which cannot be offset.

The conclusion of the 41 climate scientists, the solution to climate crisis is straightforward “real emissions reductions,” especially in advanced countries. Offsetting between high- and low-income countries should be rejected and replaced by just financing arrangements. Extraction and marketing of fossil fuels, the primary cause of climate crisis, should be stopped. Instead of “net zero” targets, humanity needs “real zero targets” to terminate fossil fuel production.

Dr. Rene E. Ofreneo is a Professor Emeritus of University of the Philippines.

For comments, please write to reneofreneo@gmail.com.



DTI-10 tackles plastic pollution in World Consumer Rights Day

By Julie NievaPublished on March 10, 2021

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, March 10--Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Northern Mindanao calls for global change to tackle plastic pollution as it joins other consumer organizations in celebrating World Consumer Rights Day come March 15.

This year's celebration highlights the role of consumers and consumer advocacy in tackling plastic pollution and demonstrate that consumers everywhere demand change for our environment and our health.

The pressing issue on consumption and production of plastics is particularly important as we continue to see the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic on plastic pollution, with an increased use of single-use products including plastic face masks, gloves, and food packaging.

The 2021 World Consumer Rights Day campaign will focus on 7Rs: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, and Replace.

By taking action, consumers can re-evaluate their consumption habits to minimize plastic use, refuse unnecessary plastic where possible and demand more sustainable alternatives from businesses and governments, reduce the amount of plastic they purchase and dispose of, extend the lifetime of plastic products by reusing them, dispose of plastic waste appropriately by following local recycling guidelines, repair items and appliances where possible, and replace plastic products or packaging with more sustainable alternatives.

To find out more about World Consumer Rights Day and sustainable consumption, visit the official Facebook page of DTI Northern Mindanao at [FB.com/DTI.Region10](https://www.facebook.com/DTI.Region10). (DTI 10)



DTI encourages consumers to use plastic alternatives

By DTI Published on March 10, 2021



MANILA, Mar. 10 -- The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), through its Consumer Policy and Advocacy Bureau (CPAB), spearheads the celebration of the World Consumer Rights (WCRD) in the country. The year 2021 marks DTI's 5th year in joining the global celebration of WCRD every 15th of March.

The annual commemoration of WCRD aims to raise global awareness on consumer rights and protection. Building on last year's celebration on being the sustainable consumer, this year's theme "Tackling Plastic Pollution" highlights the need for collective action and the important role of consumers in curbing plastic pollution.

The CPAB under the Consumer Protection Group (CPG), in coordination with Consumers International (CI), targets to educate consumers on how they can support and actively participate in tackling plastic pollution and urge them to use plastic alternatives.

This year's WCRD focuses on "7R: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, and Replace" that encourages consumers to adopt habits that will have a positive impact on the environment including re-evaluating their consumption habits, demanding more sustainable alternatives, extending the lifetime of plastic products and maximizing their value and utilization by reusing them, and disposing plastic waste appropriately by following local recycling guidelines.

For the WCRD celebration, the CPAB sets up venues for discussion and interaction on the WCRD theme "Tackling Plastic Pollution". In the Consumer e-Forum on 15 March 2021, the CI was invited to talk about "Breaking the Plastic Wave", where different measures on how to reduce the flow of plastics will be discussed.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will also be in the forum to discuss the government's sustainable actions on plastic pollution. The City Government of Pasig will likewise be present to talk about its program called "A Smart City with a Green Heart" and share their best practices to achieve green development that can withstand climate change.

In the Consumer Care Webinar Series, topics on waste management, recycling initiatives, and sustainability programs were set for discussion for the month of March 2021. Speakers from the public and private sectors were invited to virtually interact with consumers and guide them to be part in sustainability programs and activities. Consumers may virtually participate via Zoom or the DTI Consumer Care Facebook Page.



DTI CPG Undersecretary Ruth B. Castelo specifies, "The DTI urges everyone to be more conscious of the products that they intend to purchase and consider its effects on the environment. The Department encourages consumers to do their part in addressing this environmental issue by adopting habits that will have a positive environmental impact. One can help by bringing your own water container to minimize the use of plastic water bottles. You can also help by using the other side of the paper for your draft documents."

To know more about WCRD, consumers may send an email to CPAB@dti.gov.ph or visit the DTI's Consumer Care social media accounts. For more consumer-relation information, visit the DTI website (www.dti.gov.ph). (DTI)



Pepsi Cola PH says 'significantly reduced' new plastic usage in 2020

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Mar 10 2021 06:03 PM



Pepsi cola bottles are shown in this file photo. Pepsi-Cola Products Philippines Inc said Monday the country's antitrust watchdog approved the plan of, Lotte Chilsung, to buy out its fellow shareholders. *AP/file*

MANILA - Pepsi-Cola Products Philippines Inc said Wednesday it has "significantly reduced" its use of virgin plastic resin in 2020 as part of its sustainability commitments.

Pepsi Philippines said it has cut more than 76 metric tons of virgin resin plastic from its manufacturing process. This is equivalent to the weight of 3.8 million single-serve polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles, the company said.

Pepsi Philippines said it has also reduced its carton packaging material and saved as much as 2.6 MT of carton.

"Part of our DNA as responsible producers is to reduce our plastic content in our products and packaging through lightweighting initiatives," PCPPI president and CEO Frederick Ong said.

"This is us re-imagining and transforming our relationship with the environment while promoting sustainable growth for our business, our communities, and our stakeholders," he added.

The company said it was committed to decreasing its virgin plastic content in its plastic packaging by 35 percent by 2025.

Lightweighting is replacing packaging with lighter weight alternative or reducing its amount of materials used, it said.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/business/03/10/21/pepsi-cola-ph-says-significantly-reduced-new-plastic-usage-in-2020>



Palace assures: Prez Duterte not considering nationwide MECQ

March 11, 2021 1:33 AM by [Kristan Carag](#)



President Rodrigo Roa Duterte skims through a document during a meeting with the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) core members prior to his talk to the people at the Arcadia Active Lifestyle Center in Matina, Davao City on March 8, 2021. ROBINSON NIÑAL/ PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque silenced concerns that President Rodrigo Duterte plans to place the entire Philippines under stricter community quarantine status due to the recent surge in new 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) cases.

Roque assured on Tuesday, March 9, that President Duterte is not considering placing the country under enhanced community quarantine or modified enhanced community quarantine since hospitals still have the means to treat severe COVID-19 cases.

“Sapat-sapat naman yung ating kapasidad na bigyan ng medical attention yung mga matinding magkakasakit. Kaya pa natin mag-bigay lunas sa mga seryosong magkakasakit,” the Palace official said during DZRH’s *Coffee Break*.

The total number of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines rose to 600,428 after the Department of Health recorded 2,668 new infections on Tuesday.

Source: <https://dzhnews.com.ph/palace-assures-prez-duterte-not-considering-nationwide-mecq/>



PH's total COVID-19 count climbs to 603,000 with 2,886 new cases

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Mar 10, 2021 3:50:39 PM



The country's total COVID-19 cases reached 603,308 on Wednesday after 2,886 more people caught the disease, the Department of Health's bulletin said. (FILE PHOTO)

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, March 10) — The country's total COVID-19 cases reached 603,308 on Wednesday after 2,886 more people caught the disease, the Department of Health's bulletin said.

The DOH noted 44,470 active cases or currently ill patients, about 7.4% of the total. It is now the highest number of active cases after the Oct. 24 record that tallied more than 47,000 sick patients. At least 91.7% of the active cases have mild symptoms, 4% have no symptoms, 1.7% are in critical condition, 1.7% are in severe condition and 0.8% are moderate cases.

The death toll rose to 12,545 or 2.08% of the COVID-19 tally after 17 more people succumbed to the disease. Meanwhile, 221 patients recovered, lifting the survivor count to 546,293 or 90.5% of the case count.

The DOH said it reclassified four recoveries into fatalities after validation and removed four duplicates, including two recoveries. It also subtracted two cases from the total who were found to have tested negative for the coronavirus.

Data from five testing laboratories were not included in the total due to failure to submit their reports on time, the department added.

Meanwhile, the DOH's COVID-19 tracker posted the March 9 positivity rate at 10.3%, the highest since early September. The positivity rate is the number of positive individuals as a percentage of the total individuals tested for the day. Out of 35,872 patients tested on March 9, there were 3,710 who tested positive. On September 9, the positivity rate was at over 11%. The DOH will post the March 10 positivity rate the following day.

Among Filipinos abroad, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported five new infections. The total is at 15,870 in 87 countries, with 3,714 cases verified by the DOH, the DFA said. One more patient recovered while no new fatalities were recorded. The recovery count is 9,548 and the death toll stayed at 1,041. There are also 5,281 people undergoing treatment.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/3/10/PH-COVID-19-603-000.html>



CBCP OKS SA KAHIT ANONG COVID-19 VACCINE NA MERON



March 10, 2021 @ 8:34 AM 22 hours ago

MAKATOTOHANAN ang pahayag ng Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines ukol sa pagbabakuna laban sa coronavirus disease o COVID-19.

Ayon kay CBCP- Episcopal Commission on Health vice chairman Bishop Oscar Jaime Florencio, kung ano ang available o meron na bakuna sa ating harapan, siya na ang ating tanggapin na iturok sa atin.

Kung tutuusin nga naman, pare-pareho ang mga bakuna na ginagawa upang maligtas tayo sa pagkakaospital at kamatayan.

Itong kaligtasan sa pagkakaospital at kamatayan ang pinaka sa lahat ng rason sa pagpapabakuna.

Siyempre pa, meron pang ibang mahahalaga gaya ng pagkamit ng tinatawag na herd immunity sa buong bansa.

Herd immunity ang tawag sa maraming tao na nabakunahan na hindi na makahahawa sa iba o kung makahawa o mahawaan man, hindi na aabot ang pagkakasakit sa pagkakaospital at kamatayan.

Kung nabakunahan na ang nasa 70 milyong naninirahan sa Pilipinas, diyan na magkakaroon ng herd immunity.

Ang bilang na ito ang bumubuo ng kalakhan ng populasyon na pupwedeng mabakunahan dahil binubuo ang mga ito ng 19-anyos hanggang sa mga senior citizen.

Nasa 40 milyon ang edad 18 pababa na hindi pa pupwedeng bakunahan dahil hindi pa hinog umano ang katawan ng mga ito para tumanggap ng malalakas na bakuna laban sa pandemya.

Gayunman, sinabi ni Bishop Lorenzo na bigyang-respeto ang mga naghahayag ng mga alalahanin sa pagbabakuna.

'Yun bang === walang pilitan.

WALANG HUMPAY NA KAMPANYA

Maganda rin ang sinasabi ni Camillian priest Rev. Fr. Dan Cancino, executive secretary ng CBCP-Episcopal Commission on Health Care, na magsagawa ang gobyerno ng higit o agresibo pang kampanya para sa pagbabakuna laban sa COVID-19.



Hindi lamang ang pagiging ligtas at epektibo ang lalamnin ng kampanyang impormasyon kundi maging ang maaaring hindi magandang ibubunga ng mga bakuna o adverse effects.

Hindi naman lingid sa kaalaman ng lahat, na lahat ng mga bakuna ay may adverse effects na magagaan at seryoso, kasama na ang pagkakaospital at kamatayan.

Subalit kung iisipin, nasa 300 milyon na ang nababakunahan sa buong mundo samantalang paisa-isa ang mga napipinsala.

Nangangahulugan na higit na ligtas sa pagkakaospital at kamatayan sa COVID-19 ang higit na nakararaming mamamayan kung sila'y magpabakuna sa halip na umiwas dito nang walang mahalagang dahilan.

Ngayon naman, sa paghahayag ng mga kaobispuhan at kaparian ng Simbahang Katolika sa halaga ng pagpapabakuna laban sa pandemya, sila na rin mismo ay klarong tumutulong sa mga mamamayan na umunawa sa halaga ng pagpapabakuna.

At masasabing kaagapay rin sila ng pamahalaan sa paggabay sa mga mamamayan patungo sa mga vaccination center.

NAAAYON SA KAMPANYA NI POPE FRANCIS

Naaayon na rin ito sa kampanya mismo ni Pope Francis na magpabakuna ang lahat ng libo-libong empleyado ng Vatican City, kasama ang mga Cardinal, obispo, pari, seminarista, madre, sakristan at iba pa.

Mismong si Pope Francis ay nagpabakuna na rin lalo't namatay sa COVID-19 ang kanyang personal doctor na si Fabrizio Soccorsi.

Naospital sa cancer si Soccorsi ngunit nasawi ito sa kumplikasyon sa pulmonya nang atakehin ito ng COVID-19.

Noong una pa nga, sinabi mismo ni Pope Francis na parang suicide na rin ang hindi pagpapabakuna.

Dito natin naalaala na napakaraming namatay na pari, humigit-kumulang sa 80, sa Italia sa COVID-19.

Ayon pa sa CBCP, mismong ang mga miyembro nito at iba pang mga lider ng simbahan ay gusto ring magpabakuna subalit hihintayin nila ang panahong nauukol sa kanila lalo't may mga prayoridad ang pamahalaang nasyunal at lokal sa pagbabakuna, gaya ng mga health worker, lalo na ang mga frontliner.

Wala tayong masabi kundi salduhan ang CBCP sa kampanya nito sa pagpapabakuna laban sa pandemya.

May your herd increase!



Taal Volcano had 51 volcanic quakes in 24 hours, Alert Level 2 still up

Published March 10, 2021 8:25am

Alert Level 2 remains hoisted over Taal Volcano in Batangas on Wednesday morning as it continued to show increased unrest, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) said.

Fifty-one volcanic earthquakes were recorded in the past 24 hours, which include tremors with durations of one to four minutes, it said.

The main crater showed steam-laden plumes reaching as high as 5 meters being emitted from vents.

Based on the last measurements taken, the temperature of the lake in the main crater went up to as high as 71.8 degrees Celsius on March 4 and the pH level reached 1.59 on Feb. 12.

“Ground deformation parameters from electronic tilt, continuous GPS and InSAR data analysis indicated a very slow and steady inflation and expansion of the Taal region since after the January 2020 eruption,” PHIVOLCS said.

The institute reminded the public that entry is strictly prohibited on Taal Volcano Island as sudden steam-driven or phreatic explosions, volcanic earthquakes, minor ash fall and lethal accumulations or expulsions of volcanic gas may occur.

PHIVOLCS also advised local government units to assess and strengthen their preparedness of barangays around the Taal Lake which were previously evacuated should the volcano show renewed unrest.

It also advised pilots to avoid flying close to the volcano since ash and ballistic fragments from sudden explosions may be hazardous to aircraft. —**KG, GMA News**

As deforestation in Indonesia hits record low, experts fear a rebound

Officials attribute the 75 per cent drop in deforestation rate to government policies such as moratoriums on clearing primary forests and issuing licenses for new oil palm plantations.



Chainsaw used to cut forests in Sumatra, Indonesia. Image: [raulbaldean](#), [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#)

By Hans Nicholas Jong, Mongabay.com

March 10, 2021

Indonesia's deforestation rate hit a historic low in 2020, with the government crediting its various policies prohibiting forest-clearing, and experts attributing the trend to more rains, falling oil palm prices, and an economic slowdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The country lost 115,459 hectares (285,300 acres) of forest cover in 2020, an area the size of Los Angeles. That's a 75 per cent drop from 2019, according to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

"In the past, we've often said that our deforestation [rate] was in the millions [of hectares]," said Belinda Arunarwati Margono, the ministry's director of forest resource monitoring. But the 2020 deforestation rate, she said, "is remarkable for us because this is the lowest deforestation figure that we've ever achieved."

Government figures show the country also managed to maintain its total forest cover at slightly more than half (50.9 per cent) of its total land area, at 95.6 million hectares (236 million acres). That's more than double the size of California and behind only Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo in terms of tropical forest area.

The forestry ministry, which started tracking annual deforestation rates in 1990, attributed the drop last year to the culmination of a number of policies aimed at protecting the country's forests. These include a permanent ban on issuing new permits to clear primary forests and peatlands; a moratorium on new oil palm plantation licenses; forest fire mitigation; a social forestry programme; land rehabilitation; and increased enforcement against environmental violations.

"This [drop in deforestation] shows that various efforts done by the Ministry Environment and Forestry lately have produced significant results," said Ruandha Agung Suhardiman, the ministry's director-general of planning. "Their impact on reducing deforestation is tremendous."

Arief Wijaya, senior manager of climate and forests at the World Resources Institute (WRI) Indonesia, agreed that these policies could have had a positive impact on the deforestation rate, adding that the government's efforts "should be appreciated." He also said other factors, such as the economy and the weather, may have contributed to the drop.

For one thing, Arief said, 2020 was wetter than usual, and in fact [among the wettest years](#) in the past four decades, thanks to the La Niña weather system.

“As a result, fires dropped to 296,000 hectares [731,400 acres of land] and deforestation [from fires] was only 1,100 hectares [2,700 acres],” he told Mongabay.

He also pointed to the decrease in global oil palm prices since 2013, responsible for slowing the expansion of the industry.

“Since 2013, the global oil palm prices tend to fluctuate and decline due to the decreasing demand for the vegetable oil, which might be caused by the trade war with the European Union which is looking to phase out [palm oil-based biodiesel from] Indonesia,” he said. “Coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic last year, of course industries are slowing down.”

[A recent study](#), not yet peer-reviewed, has also attributed the slowing deforestation rate in Indonesia to declining oil palm plantation expansion and lower palm oil prices. The study, out by researchers from technology company TheTreeMap and other institutions, found that the rates of plantation expansion and forest loss correlated with palm oil prices.

According to the study, a price decline of 1 per cent was associated with a 1.08 per cent decrease in new plantations and a 0.68 per cent decrease in forest loss. The trends showed deforestation peaking in 2016 and falling below pre-2004 levels in 2017-2019 following a slowdown in new plantations being established from its peak in 2012.

Mufthi Fathul Barri, a researcher with Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI), said another factor that likely contributed to the decline in deforestation was the economic slump induced by measures imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The disruption to economic activity can be seen from timber production from natural forests, which declined,” he said. “In 2019, Indonesia produced timber from 8.4 million hectares [20.7 million acres] of natural forests. In 2020, it was 6.6 million hectares [16.3 million acres].”

Deforestation means there are still forests lost... don't get fixated with the percentage drop without looking at the real size [of deforestation].

Grita Anindarini, programme director, Indonesian Center for Environmental Law
No time to slack off

Arief said Indonesia should sustain its efforts to bring down the deforestation rate and not become complacent after recording a historic low.

“Indonesia's declining deforestation is a good trend that we have to maintain together, and even strengthen, because next year, El Niño might return,” he said, referring to the weather system that typically brings an intense and prolonged dry season — ideal conditions for forest fires to spread out of control.

And with Indonesia's Covid-19 vaccination drive underway, the anticipated economic recovery could jump-start forest-clearing activity, Arief added.

“So the government's commitments in maintaining deforestation rate this low have to be protected, as well as the zero-deforestation commitments by the private sector,” he said, adding it's important not to sacrifice the environment for economic growth.

Grita Anindarini, programme director at the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law (ICEL), said the declining deforestation in Indonesia should be commended, but the government shouldn't be satisfied with the figure.

“Deforestation means there are still forests lost,” Grita said. “In the span of two years [since 2019], a total of 578,000 hectares [1.4 million acres], almost the size of the province of Jakarta [was deforested]. So don't get fixated with the percentage drop without looking at the real size [of deforestation].”

The forestry ministry's Belinda said the government is not pursuing a zero-deforestation target as part of its climate pledge, or nationally determined contribution (NDC), under the Paris Agreement.

“Because in our NDC, it's been said that Indonesia still [has room for] deforestation,” she said. “It's because Indonesia is still developing and of course we [try to] curb deforestation as much as possible.”

Land use change, which includes deforestation and forest fires, accounts for most of Indonesia's greenhouse gas emissions. Under Indonesia's NDC, the government allows up to 325,000 hectares (803,000 acres) of deforestation per year to reach its emissions reduction goal while leaving room for economic development. That means that by the 2030 deadline for the Paris Agreement, Indonesia could potentially clear 3.25 million hectares (8 million acres) of rainforest, an area larger than Belgium, and still call it a success.

[A 2018 report](#) by the NGO Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) [shows](#) this won't be enough to cap the average global temperature increase at 1.5° Celsius (2.7° Fahrenheit) as mandated under the Paris Agreement.

Annisa Rahmawati, an environmental advocate at U.S.-based campaign organization Mighty Earth, called for a more ambitious deforestation and climate target by the Indonesian government. As global emissions continue to rise, with energy-related emissions already [rebounding back](#) to pre-Covid-19 levels amid a revival in economic activity, Annisa said even stopping deforestation outright might not be sufficient.

“Even zero deforestation is no longer enough considering the current condition of our climate,” she told Mongabay. “Experts say our planet is already warming by 1.2°C [2.2°F], and soon we'll reach 1.5°C. So we have to start reforesting in better ways than before. All forests have to be protected no matter their functions, coupled with conservation and restoration as massive as possible.”

More ambitious targets

Grita from ICEL said reforestation is one aspect where Indonesia still has a long way to go.

“Our reforestation number is still very small, only 3,000 hectares [7,400 acres] in 2018-2019 and 3,600 hectares [8,900 acres] in 2019-2020,” she said. “This can be greatly improved. The government should be more confident about achieving more ambitious emissions reduction in the forestry sector.”

In 2019, Indonesian officials [considered](#) boosting the country's emissions reduction target to 45 per cent, from the previous figure of 41 per cent with international aid. But in 2020, the government [decided](#) not to go for the higher figure, saying it wants to focus instead on economic growth.

Key to that focus is a slate of deregulation measures passed last year, in particular the revised mining law and the so-called omnibus law on job creation. Critics say these measures [roll back environmental protections](#) and could lead to greater deforestation. For instance, the omnibus law removes an article in the 1999 Forestry Law that requires at least 30 per cent of each watershed and/or island area be maintained as forest area.

The government's recent ambition to establish millions of hectares of farmland across Indonesia under the "food estate" programme has also prompted concerns over future deforestation. [A new study](#) by the NGO Madani shows that there are 1.57 million hectares (3.8 million acres) of natural forests located in areas targeted by the government for conversion into farmland.

Nearly nine-tenths of these forests are in the province of Papua, one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth and home to the majority of Indonesia's remaining tropical rainforest.

"Our last frontier of intact tropical forest in Papua is in the food estate programme's area of interest," said Madani researcher Anggalia Putri.

She noted that the food estate programme is exempted from the moratorium on clearing primary forests and peatlands; 1 million hectares (2.5 million acres) of the programme's area of interest in Papua is theoretically covered by the moratorium.

Going the way of Bolsonaro's Brazil

In [an interview](#) with the BBC last year, President Joko Widodo said his priority was to boost economic growth, and that "maybe after that, then the environment [will be the priority], innovation and then human rights. Why not?"

Arief said Indonesia could easily end up like Brazil if it's not careful.

Between 2004 and the early 2010s, annual forest loss in Brazil, home to nearly two-thirds of the Amazon's forest cover, declined by roughly 80 per cent. [The drop was driven by a number of factors](#), including increased law enforcement, satellite monitoring, pressure from environmentalists, private and public sector initiatives, new protected areas, and macroeconomic trends.

But Brazil's success in curbing deforestation has stalled since 2012, and forest loss has increased since then, especially under the administration of President Jair Bolsonaro, who [came to office](#) in January 2019.

Bolsonaro campaigned on the promise to open the Amazon to the extractive industries and agribusiness while disparaging environmentalists and Indigenous peoples, and immediately set about dismantling protections for the Amazon when he took office. Deforestation has increased sharply under his watch, reaching [levels not seen since the mid-2000s](#).

"Don't let us become like Brazil, where even its foreign donor, Norway, has [decided to stop its support](#) for the Amazon Fund because deforestation in the Amazon keeps rising," Arief said. "What Indonesia has achieved has to be maintained because the potential for massive deforestation is still there."

Arief said that now that it's been proven that Indonesia can slash its deforestation rate significantly, the government should not be afraid to adopt a more ambitious climate pledge.

"Maybe Indonesia can have bolder climate target, more than 41 per cent [by 2030]," he said. "Because in order to limit global warming by 1.5 degrees, we have to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050."



And achieving this ambitious target doesn't mean that Indonesia has to sacrifice its economy, according to Annisa. For instance, she said, the government can focus on restoring the millions of hectares of degraded peatlands and forests, something which will create jobs.

“Restoration and conservation activities are one of the best job creators, where the involvement of local people is key to success,” Annisa said. “Non-timber forest resources as well as ecosystem services are also abundant [in Indonesia], which can be managed sustainably without destroying forests.”

She said there's needs to be a change in mindset from the established perception that clearing forested land is the only way to get value out of it.

“Massive exploitation and deforestation don't lead to growth because no matter how much money we get [from it], when there's a disaster [caused by the exploitation], the money will go away, and so we can't develop,” Annisa said. “Because there's no business on a dead planet.”

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Ecuador hatches 9 rare turtles

By Agence France-Presse

March 11, 2021

QUITO: Nine leatherback turtles — the largest endangered marine turtle in the world — were hatched along the coast of Ecuador, the Ministry of Environment said on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila).

The *Dermochelys coriacea* — the turtle's scientific name — eggs were artificially incubated on the Punta Bikini beach, in the Manabi province in the southwest of the country. Rangers in the region had moved their nest after a harsh winter hit the coastal region.

“This new hatching has allowed us to determine that we can achieve a high level of artificial hatching of these turtles, which represents an important stage for Ecuador in the matter of conservation,” veterinarian Daniel Alava, from the Corazon and Fraguas Island Refuge, said in a statement.

In January, 60 of the leatherback turtles, which can measure up to 3 meters (9 feet) long and weigh up to a ton, were born in the South American country, also in Manabi.

“On the Manabi coast, this is the second time we have carried out an incubation of this species, which has a low reproduction rate of just 50 percent of eggs hatching,” the statement said.

The *Dermochelys coriacea* species lives in temperate tropical, subtropical and subarctic waters in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans.

It is in critical danger of disappearing in the eastern Pacific. Leatherback turtle nests were also found along the Ecuadorian coast in 2015 and 2017, but the eggs did not hatch.

11 MARCH 2021, THURSDAY



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