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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





## DENR Receives PEZA Galing Pinas Partnership Excellence Award

[Wednesday, March 23, 2022](#) [Journal Online](#)



**Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna (middle)** accepts the Galing Pinas Partnership Excellence Award conferred by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) Director General Charito B. Plaza (fourth from right) on March 17, 2022 at the PEZA Auditorium in Macapagal Avenue, Pasay City. Held during PEZA's 27th anniversary celebration, the award was given in recognition of DENR's support and assistance to the initiatives of PEZA to attract more investors in the country through the creation of economic zones. The [DENR](#) is a member of the PEZA Board responsible for policy-making and rules enforcement governing the establishment and operation of economic zones. [DENR](#) Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs Atty. Michelle Angelica Go and Environmental Management Bureau IV-A Director Noemi Paranada (both not in photo) were also recipients of the award. Also in photo are other [PEZA](#) officials and awardees.



## DENR-NCR cites Villar for championing environmental protection and water sustainability



BYBMPLUS

MARCH 23, 2022



Environmental Champion awardee. DENR-NCR confers a Plaque of Recognition to Sen. Cynthia Villar as “Environmental Champion” during the awarding ceremony of “Gawad Taga-Ilog 2.0: Search for the Most Improved Estero in Metro Manila” held in Quezon City on Tuesday. Attendees in the event are DENR Director Al Orolfo, DENR Assistant Secretary Gilbert Gonzales, DENR-NCR Regional Director Jacqueline Caangcan, DENR Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna and Benito Antonio De Leon and Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office Representative Ignacio Almira Jr. The senator, chairperson of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, is a frontrunner in keeping a healthy environment and maintaining water sustainability.

IN recognition of her invaluable contributions to keep the environment and waterways clean and healthy, Senator Cynthia Villar was an awardee in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources- National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) “Gawad Taga-Ilog 2.0: Search for the Most Improved Estero in Metro Manila” during the celebration of World Water Day (WWD).

The DENR-NCR also acknowledged Villar for her strong advocacy in the protection of natural resources, solid waste management, sustainable tourism and community development.

In her Acceptance Speech during the event held at Radisson North EDSA, Quezon City, Villar noted that as an individual, a legislator and a public servant,

these have always been her priorities and advocacies.

The senator has been at the forefront of maintaining a healthy environment, especially now that we are facing a global health crisis. She has likewise been making strides for the realization of water sustainability.



## DENR-NCR cites Villar for championing environmental protection and water sustainability

Villar, chairperson of the Senate committee on environment and natural resources, recalled that “four years ago on this day in 2018, together with the Manila Bay Site Coordinating Management Office and all other organizations, the DENR-NCR also awarded me as “Kampeon ng Katubigan” for my efforts in leading the protection of bodies of water such as the Las Piñas Zapote River and the Las Piñas Parañaque Wetland Park.”

“Eleven years ago, in 2011, I also received an award for the river rehabilitation program. I started in my home city- the Sagip Ilog program. It bested other initiatives from 38 other countries and won the United Nations Water for Life Best Water Management Practices during World Water Day celebration in Zaragosa, Spain,” also said Villar.

Such recognitions, the senator asserted, challenged her to do even more for the environment.

“Now, it’s World Water Day again, and the theme of this year’s celebration is, “Groundwater: making the invisible visible”, which highlights an otherwise invisible water resource,” related Villar.

The United Nations’ International Groundwater Resources Assessment Center (UN-IGRC) said groundwater is a vital resource providing almost half of all drinking water worldwide, about 40% of water for irrigated agriculture and about 1/3 of water required for industries.

Because the Philippines is an agricultural country, Villar stressed that water is vital for the country’s food security, among others.

“We do have to keep on reminding people that water is not an infinite resource and it is in fact getting scarce,” she said.

“The World Economic Forum, water scarcity is among the biggest challenges to the global economy. So, water security becomes an even more important and urgent concern for all of us,” said Villar.

Furthermore, she stressed that groundwater, in particular, sustains ecosystems and maintains the baseflow of rivers. Groundwater is also an important part of climate change adaptation process and is often a solution for people without access to safe water.

But despite these impressive facts and figures, Villar lamented the UN-IGRC cited that invisible groundwater is out of sight and out of mind for most people.

There are already over 663 million people around the world without access to safe drinking water and the world’s population continues to grow at such a fast pace. “So, we need to ensure that we have a steady and sustainable supply by addressing the various challenges confronting water resources and of course, finding solutions,” added the senator.





## Villar bags DENR award for environmental advocacies



by [Macon Ramos-Araneta](#)

[March 23, 2022, 10:20 pm](#)

in [National, News](#)

Reading Time: 2 mins read

Sen. Cynthia Villar was conferred on Wednesday a government award for her environmental advocacies including solid waste management, sustainable tourism, and community development.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) handed the award to the senator in rites held at the Radisson North EDSA in Quezon City in line with the agency's Gawad Taga-Ilog 2,0. Search for the Most Improved Estero in Metro Manila, highlighting observance of the World Water Day.

In her acceptance speech, Villar noted that as an individual, a legislator and a public servant, these have always been her priorities and advocacies.

The senator has been at the forefront of maintaining a healthy environment, especially now that the world faces a global health crisis.

She has likewise been making strides for the realization of water sustainability. Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, recalled that "four years ago on this day in 2018, together with the Manila Bay Site Coordinating Management Office and all other organizations, the DENR-NCR also awarded me as "Kampeon ng Katubigan" for my efforts in leading the protection of bodies of water such as the Las Piñas Zapote River and the Las Piñas Parañaque Wetland Park."

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## DENR-NCR cites Villar for championing environmental protection and water sustainability

[March 23, 2022](#) 3 min read

By Ernie Reyes

MANILA — In recognition of her invaluable contributions to keep the environment and waterways clean and healthy, Senator Cynthia Villar received a rare accolade in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources- National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) “Gawad Taga-Ilog 2.0: Search for the Most Improved Estero in Metro Manila” during the celebration of World Water Day (WWD).

The DENR-NCR also acknowledged Villar for her strong advocacy in the protection of natural resources, solid waste management, sustainable tourism and community development.

In her Acceptance Speech in the event held at Radisson North EDSA, Quezon City, Villar noted that as an individual, a legislator and a public servant, these have always been her priorities and advocacies.

The senator has been at the forefront of maintaining a healthy environment, especially now that we are facing a global health crisis. She has likewise been making strides for the realization of water sustainability.

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Such recognitions, the senator asserted, challenged her to do even more for the environment.

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There are already over 663 million people around the world without access to safe drinking water and the world's population continues to grow at such a fast pace.

“So, we need to ensure that we have a steady and sustainable supply by addressing the various challenges confronting water resources and of course, finding solutions,” added the senator.  
(ai/mtvn)





# Ahead of Earth Hour, Filipinos urged to bike more, choose leaders with plans to address climate crisis

Philstar.com March 23, 2022 | 2:03pm



People look at brahmyni kites inside an aviary at the Manila Zoological and Botanical Garden in Manila on December 30, 2021, during a soft opening for employees and their family members after the department of Environment and Natural Resources identified it as a major pollutant of Manila Bay and closed the facility in 2019.

AFP/Maria Tan

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Wednesday urged Filipinos to elect leaders with policies on climate change mitigation as part of making environmental stewardship a part of their “new normal” lifestyle.

In a release issued ahead of the annual Earth Hour event on March 26, DENR acting secretary Jim Sampulna called on the public to go beyond the symbolic switching off of lights for an hour by creating “a norm that puts our planet and, ultimately, our people first.”

The acting DENR chief encouraged Filipinos to use bicycles and mass transit systems, carpool to go to places, reduce plastic usage and be conscious consumers.

He added that voters must elect leaders who will prioritize climate change mitigation. Although United Nations scientists have already warned that the window to act to avoid climate catastrophe is closing fast, climate change has been largely missing from the election campaign.

“Sustainability should already be a lifestyle and a common goal for each Filipino,” he said.

Sampulna stressed the ambitious goal of the Philippines to slash planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030 cannot be attained if the government works alone and if people continue their unsustainable practices.

“Climate change is no longer a foreign term for all of us. With all the typhoons and disasters we have experienced in the past, I hope that Filipinos are already conscious and responsible towards taking care of the environment,” he said.

The department urged Filipinos to join this year’s Earth Hour by switching off computers, television sets, airconditioning units, and non-essential lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday.

The DENR committed to pursue the enforcement of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 and Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, and strengthen the National Greening Program. — **Gaea Katreena Cabico**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/climate-and-environment/2022/03/23/2169358/ahead-earth-hour-filipinos-urged-bike-more-choose-leaders-plans-address-climate-crisis>



## Food firm conserves water via reduce, reuse, recycle program

March 23, 2022, 5:25 pm



*File photo*

**MANILA** – A food firm has managed to save over 11 million cubic meters of water since 2018 through various water conservation initiatives integral to its corporate social responsibility.

“We recognize that water is a non-renewable resource, and that it is an essential input material in the production of our products,” Universal Robina Corp. (URC) chief executive officer Irwin Lee said.

Lee said URC has saved enough water over the past four years to fill 4,600 Olympic-size swimming pools.

Last year, the company managed to recycle over 860,000 cubic meters, enough to cover the water needs of 2.26 million people for a day.

These were all achieved through URC’s reduce, reuse and recycle program meant to optimize water use.

URC has been reducing its water consumption by fixing leaks, replacing pipes with more durable materials like stainless steel, eliminating production wastage, improving the efficiency of its water treatment facilities, and using rainwater harvesting methods.



## Food firm conserves water via reduce, reuse, recycle program

It reuses water when cleaning pallets, watering plants, and flushing toilets.

It recycles water meant for washing critical raw materials used in its products, such as unpeeled potato, as well as for its cooling towers.

URC also has a slew of programs to protect key watersheds.

It has company-wide environmental stewardship initiatives, including reforestation programs, coastal, river and drainage clean-up drives, and mangrove-planting activities.

Last year, some 7,600 seedlings were planted across different sites through URC's partnerships with local government units and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The company's Sugar and Renewables Group, meanwhile, has signed a memorandum of agreement with the DENR to adopt a three-hectare forest in Manjuyod town in Negros Oriental, and another five hectares in San Enrique, Iloilo.

It has plans to adopt more watersheds and forests. **(PR)**





9 hrs · 🌐

Each Earth Hour activity helps our environment in many ways. By joining #EarthHour at home and switching off our lights for an hour, we can help our planet and ensure a future where we will live in a healthy and friendly world.

Learn how to join these movements via <https://www.earthhour.org/> or WWF-Philippines.

As CDN Digital joins Earth Hour 2022, this series is also supported by our partners, leading renewable energy provider Aboitiz Power Corporation, your reliable partner Primary Homes Inc., and leading energy company in the Visayas Region and Mindoro Island Global Business Power Corporation.

#CDNWhatsUp #BrandRoom #EarthHour #EarthHour2022 #Philippines



## South Cotabato development council affirms ban on open-pit mining method



[BYJONATHAN L. MAYUGA](#)

MARCH 23, 2022

The Provincial Development Council (PDC) of South Cotabato has upheld the ban on open-pit mining method, a policy that hinders the operation of the Tampakan Copper-Gold Project.

Anti-mining advocates hailed the PDC's move. This even as the provincial government of South Cotabato is set to make a decision in the coming weeks whether to reverse the ban it had instituted in 2010.

In a resolution approved on March 9, 2022, PDC said, "the environmental and social impacts of the open-pit mining method outweigh economic gains."

In upholding the ban, the PDC cited the "one health" theory, or "an approach that recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment."

Governor Reynaldo Tamayo Jr., who also sits as chairman of the PDC, approved the resolution.

"This resolution is a good sign that the provincial government itself will eventually uphold the open-pit ban enshrined in the landmark environmental code of South Cotabato. We hope that the province will take its cue from the Provincial Development Council, which has chosen to prioritize the environment and well-being of people," said Maya Quirino, advocacy coordinator of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC).

The Tampakan Copper-Gold Project (TCGP), which covers an area the size of the city of Manila, straddles four provinces. Environmentalists said its operation threatens watershed systems that may have dire consequences to people and the environment in South Cotabato and contiguous areas.

A risk-mapping assessment by the Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) and World Resources Institute found that TCGP "belongs to an area of high ecological values [which comprise protected areas, primary forests, mangroves, and Unesco World Heritage Sites], high groundwater vulnerability [very likely affecting groundwater quantity and quality], medium-high vulnerability to watershed stress, medium social vulnerability [based on functional literacy, welfare and NGO/people's organization membership], and high seismic risk."

The mining project covers an area of around 10,000 hectares, portions of which include rainforests and agricultural land that will be cleared for the project. This, according to the same ESSC study, "will remove topsoil and destroy wildlife in an area with high unique biodiversity, with over 1,000 floral species and 280 recorded fauna species, of which 30 percent are endemic to the Philippines, and over 50 species are already under threat of extinction. The excavation itself will break into, disrupt, de-water and degrade the aquifer in the area."

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/03/23/south-cotabato-development-council-affirms-ban-on-open-pit-mining-method/>



## Antique's underwater beauty preems on Discovery Channel



By [Christina Alpad](#)

March 23, 2022



Antique Representative Loren Legarda hopes that in highlighting the province's rich marine biodiversity, the documentary will attract more local and international tourists to come and visit.

Antique may not be the first province that comes to mind when one thinks of Western Visayas. With the world-famous Boracay Island in Aklan, culinary hotspot Iloilo and the Mango Capital of the Philippines, Guimaras, among its nearest and more popular neighbors, Antique is often and mistakenly overlooked as a worthwhile destination for local and international tourists.

In truth, this underrated province has so much more to offer, which a new documentary set to premiere tonight on Discovery Channel hopes to prove. Brace yourselves and be awed by one of Antique's natural charms — it's rich marine biodiversity.

"Antique is a paradise where the mountains meet the sea. It is a province that may have been in the doldrums for three decades but is now experiencing [its] Golden Age," said Loren Legarda, Deputy Speaker and Representative of the Lone District of Antique.

One of the testaments of the province's rich biodiversity is the inclusion of two legislated protected areas in the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS) — a landmark marine protection and conservation law that Legarda authored — namely, Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park and Sibalom Natural Park.

Harnessing this treasure, Legarda put efforts in discovering, documenting and protecting Antique's rich marine biodiversity.





## Antique's underwater beauty preems on Discovery Channel

Besides authoring bills for the province's marine protection — such as the establishment of a multi-species marine hatchery in Tibiao and the Northern Antique Protected Seascape and Landscape — Legarda also allocated budget under the Department of Tourism (DOT) that was implemented by the local government of Antique and the DOT regional office.

With this initiative, the documentary "Antique: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea" was born.

In early 2021, Studio H2O organized an expedition team composed of marine researchers, scientists, and underwater cinematographers. Aside from conducting a scientific survey of the reefs in Antique — particularly around the coastal areas of Pandan Bay and Libertad — the project also held a free diving workshop for fisherfolk with the intention of teaching them how to survey, protect and do an inventory of their own marine areas.

"Part of the survey is to have the local people learn the method so they can continue on with the monitoring, or at least be interested in learning more about it," shared Tara Abrina, one of the team's researchers and free diving instructors. "The objective of the project was really for tourism, to see where people can go to dive, where guests can stay, and what might be interesting underwater."

And interesting they indeed found. During the survey, the team had a rare sighting of an oceanic manta ray, a creature known to visit nutrient-rich waters that provide zooplankton. The oceanic manta ray is famous for its majestic form that could reach up to twenty-three feet across.

"The discovery and sighting of the existence of the manta ray in our waters is so important because it shows they thrive in a healthy marine ecosystem," Legarda proudly noted.

"And the manta ray, of course, must be protected at all costs, especially because it is identified as possibly threatened for extinction," Legarda said, adding that the oceanic manta ray sighting can draw in more visitors and open up more possibilities for the province's ecotourism.

The rare sighting affirmed Legarda's belief that the tedious task of survey and documentation is crucial in educating the public about the all-important work of protecting the environment.

"How can we protect something we don't know exists and so documenting all of this — taking photos and video without destroying their habitats — is very important," Legarda ended.

The underwater beauty of the province, as well as the true heart of the Antiqueños, are all captured in "Antique: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea," which is produced by Studio H2O through the Office of Deputy Speaker Legarda, the Department of Tourism in partnership with the Province of Antique.

The 20-minute documentary will air on Discovery Channel tonight, March 23, 6:15 p.m. with replays on March 24 at 8:15 a.m. and 11:25 a.m. Discovery Channel is available in the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and India.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/03/23/entertainment-lifestyle/life-times/antiques-underwater-beauty-preems-on-discovery-channel/1837255>

## Empowering communities through access to clean, safe water



Some of the participants of the site visit for the Partnership for Water and Economic Resilience (P4Water) project at Barangay Ilijan in Bago City, Negros Occidental yesterday, March 22. (Erwin P. Nicavera Photo)



Officials and representatives of partner-organizations with some of the host-residents on the sidelines of the project visit that coincides with the World Water Day celebration. (Erwin P. Nicavera Photo)





## Empowering communities through access to clean, safe water



Aside from the project site visit, the groups also plant trees in the area. (Erwin P. Nicavera Photo)



Neda Undersecretary Roderick Planta reaffirms the agency's commitment to champion the goal of universal access to safe water and sanitation services integrated with sustainable water resource management. (Erwin P. Nicavera Photo)

[ERWIN P. NICAVERA](#)

March 23, 2022

“COLLECTIVE action and partnership have always been at the forefront in assuring positive impact of various initiatives, particularly in the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of watersheds.”

This was underscored by National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Undersecretary Roderick Planta during the site visit for the Partnership for Water and Economic Resilience (P4Water) project at Barangay Ilijan in Bago City yesterday, March 22.

The P4Water is one of the watershed conservation projects of Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines Inc. in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (Usaid), Federation of Multisectoral Alliance for Development (Muad) - Negros, and Provincial Government of Negros Occidental.





## Empowering communities through access to clean, safe water

It's a four-year partnership that aims to provide safe water access to underserved communities in Negros Occidental through watershed conservation initiatives.

Citing the baseline assessment conducted by the Usaid Safe Water project, Planta said Negros occidental has a lot of catching up to do to provide safe water and safely-managed sanitation services for every Negrense.

Compounding this issue, he said, is the current state of the watershed in the province which is threatened by deforestation and climate change effects.

"The Neda commends the P4Water project of Coca Cola Foundation and its partners for demonstrating collective action and partnership on addressing the issues on diminishing water supply and continued degradation of forest, particularly in Bago River and Malogo River Watersheds," Planta said.

The Neda official noted that activities like capacity building of project partners, protection of natural springs and forest, and promotion of sustainable livelihood help improve the quality of life of the people in the upstream communities and ensure the protection of crucial water resources which many communities depend on.

As he recognized such a partnership, Planta reaffirmed the agency's commitment to champion the goal of universal access to safe water and sanitation services integrated with sustainable water resource management.

Yesterday's project site visit coincided with the celebration of World Water Day and marked the first year of the P4Water project implementation in Bago City. Officials and representatives of different partner-organizations along with the residents in the community also planted trees in the area.

Usaid Philippines Mission Director Ryan Washburn said watersheds are critical for sustaining clean drinking water and livelihood for many families.

On this occasion of World Water Day, global attention is focused on diminished water sources, particularly from groundwater, which is a major concern in the country, Washburn said.

Over half of the 110 million Philippine population depend on ground water for drinking water, he said, adding that in Negros Occidental, 90 percent of the water delivered to cities are sourced from ground water.



## Empowering communities through access to clean, safe water

“Usaid through Safe Water is helping Negros Occidental in its initiative to build a water-secure future by developing hydrological studies that provide evidence and scientific data to inform the province long term water security plan,” the mission director said.

Washburn recognized the contribution of the city and provincial governments, the “generosity” of Coca Cola and hardwork of Muad - Negros for the initial gains of the P4Water project which for them has fostered synergy among these groups.

“It is invigorating to walk across the field and see firsthand our partnership and action, as well as address the watershed and livelihood concern of the communities in the barangay,” he said, adding that “Usaid is proud to be part of this initiative that advances the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of watersheds, including here in Bago City.”

Reaffirming the firm’s commitment to providing clean and safe water to the country’s vulnerable communities, Coca Cola Foundation Philippines Inc. president Ma. Cecilia Alcantara stressed that “water is so important to all of us, water is life.”

In fact, water is a flagship program of the company. With its Agos program, its aim is to make water flowing for life, for communities, Alcantara said.

“Here in Negros, we have our biggest water initiative, we have 60 community water systems mostly using ram pump technology for very underserved communities mostly in the upland,” she said, adding that “this bigger project will not just provide water to communities but will ensure water security for the Negros Island.”

For his part, Bago City Mayor Nicholas Yulo, who was also present at the activity, said this is an important project that everyone needs to support as water means life and water resources sources may soon deplete.

“Most of our water resources come from here. We have several springs in this barangay alone,” Yulo said, as he thanked the residents at the upland “for preserving the natural resources and for giving us water at the lowland.”

Coca-Cola Philippines president Tony del Rosario, in a statement, said “water is essential for life, for nature and for every community. As a beverage company, Coca-Cola also depends on water to operate our business.”

“This is why responsible water management remains a top priority for us at Coca-Cola. Our continuing partnership with Usaid, Muad-Negros, and the local government is a step toward our vision of a world where there is water security for our business, communities, and the environment where we operate, source ingredients, and touch people’s lives,” he added.



## Empowering communities through access to clean, safe water

In response, Rodel Cadigal, of the United Ilijan Agricultural Workers for Sustainable Development, said the project has helped them improve their livelihood by protecting the forest through one, planting seedlings in the nursery.

“We are happy to be part of the effort to ensure that we have supply of water through the protection and conservation of the watershed in the city,” he said, adding that “we were also equipped with the knowledge on how to save and implement new agriculture practices and technologies.”\*





## BARMM marks Int'l Day of Forests with tree planting activities

By Edwin Fernandez March 23, 2022, 4:05 pm



**MORE TREES.** Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MENRE-BARMM) Minister Akmad Brahim plants a mahogany seedling in Sitio Tenorio, Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao on Tuesday (March 22, 2022). The simultaneous region wide activity forms as part of the BARMM's contribution to reforestation and observance of the International Day of Forests. *(Photo courtesy of Bangsamoro Information Office – BARMM)*

**COTABATO CITY** – To help improve the region's forest cover, employees of the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao - (MENRE-BARMM) have conducted simultaneous tree planting activities.

“This is in celebration of the International Day of Forests,” MENRE newly-designated Minister Akmad Brahim said in a statement Wednesday.

Brahim led MENRE officials and employees in the simultaneous tree planting in Sitio Lomboy, Barangay Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat where more than 550 seedlings of mahogany species were planted Tuesday afternoon.

Field personnel of MENRE also planted 200 seedlings in Barangay Udalo in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur; 250 Yakal seedlings at Sitio Pilar, Barangay Yakal in Lantawan, Basilan; and 50 mangrove propagules at Barangay Pahut in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

A tree planting activity in Sulu was held earlier on March 17 during the visit of Brahim to the province.

“In protecting our forests, as one of the mandates of the MENRE, we also help in preserving wildlife habitats, biodiversity, and conserving forest resources for communities and families whose



## **BARMM marks Int'l Day of Forests with tree planting activities**

livelihood and sources of income are forest-dependent,” Brahim said.

Lawyer Badr Salendab, MENRE director-general, who also joined the tree planting, stressed the importance of continual planting of trees.

“This celebration (International Day of Forests -) reminds the public regarding the importance of reforestation against climate change,” she said. “Conserving and protecting the environment is part of everyone's responsibility not only for their well-being but also for future generations.”

Held every March 21, the International Day of Forests aims to raise awareness on the importance of forests to people, and their role in poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, and food security.

This year's theme is “Forests and sustainable production and consumption.”

BARMM has some 300,000 hectares of remaining forest cover, data from MENRE-BARMM showed. (*PNA*)



## San Juan signs environmental MOAs, launches PH's first reverse vending machine

Published March 22, 2022, 7:26 PM

by [Patrick Garcia](#)

In its effort to boost its environmental protection programs, the San Juan City local government partnered with several environmental protection organizations on Tuesday, March 22, as it moves towards a greener city.



(Photo by Patrick Garcia)

San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora led the signing of several memoranda of agreement (MOA) with Greenpeace Country Director Lea Guerrero, Plastic Credit Exchange Founder and Chairman Nanette Medved, and Eastwest Builders Inc.'s CEO Arthur Lee.





## San Juan signs environmental MOAs, launches PH's first reverse vending machine



(Photo by Patrick Garcia)

“We are following through with our promise of creating a cleaner and greener San Juan for all and we are thankful that we have partnered with Greenpeace, Plastic Credit Exchange, and Eastwest in these initiatives,” Zamora said.

Zamora signed three MOAs with Greenpeace under the Livable and Lovable Cities Program.

One of the agreements is the Air Quality Monitoring MOA that will address the air pollution in the city. Air quality monitoring devices will be placed in strategic places such as the Agora Public Market and Pinaglabanan Shrine to check the air quality. Data gathered from these devices will allow Greenpeace and San Juan City to come up with plans and projects to clean the air.

The Alternative Delivery Systems for Communities MOA, on the other hand, encourages San Juanenos to reuse their containers and minimize single-use plastic. A station will be placed in Brgy. Onse where residents can buy wellness products like shampoo and conditioner by bringing their own containers.

The last MOA is the Better Cities System, a project designed to develop maps containing data on best practices of the community for information awareness campaigns.

The MOA between San Juan and Plastic Credit Exchange, dubbed as the “Aling Tindera Program”, is a project where residents can bring in their recyclable plastics to recycling stations in exchange for cash in Brgy. Pasadena and Brgy. Corazon de Jesus.

Meanwhile, Zamora and Lee launched the country’s very first reverse vending machine, called the Reverse Vending YC-301.



## San Juan signs environmental MOAs, launches PH's first reverse vending machine



(Photo by Patrick Garcia)

According to Lee, the Reverse Vending YC-301 is an aluminum can and bottle recycling machine developed by Incom Tomra Recycling Technology.

The RVM collects different beverage containers and can identify 100 different barcodes from 100 different bottles (350, 500, 1000, 1500 ml) and standard-sized aluminum cans. It can store up to 300 (300 ml) cans and 400 (300 ml) PET bottles. It is also equipped with a touch screen feature and compression module to improve the capacity of the storage.

Once the RVM is full, Incom Tomra will collect the bottles and be brought to recycling facilities.

Zamora explained that in order to encourage people to recycle, they will get incentives through redemption coupons. There will be scheduled redemptions for those who will receive the coupons after recycling their bottles and cans via the machine.

Rewards will initially be claimed through redemption booths, but the city government is already working on partnering with different malls so coupons will then be converted to points in their reward cards.

“We are hoping that these recycling and refusing single use plastic initiatives gain traction and encourage San Juaneños to minimize their carbon footprint. Once it becomes successful, we can bring more RVMs to high-foot traffic areas in the city and put more Aling Tindera stations around the city,” Zamora said.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2022/03/22/san-juan-signs-environmental-moas-launches-phs-first-reverse-vending-machine/>

## All countries are failing to hit minimum air quality benchmarks: report

Air pollution, made worse by climate change, contributes to the global burden of disease and is to blame for the death of 40,000 children under the age of five last year.



A student goes to school wearing a mask to protect him from the smoke that blankets the city of Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan. Image: [Aulia Erlangga/CIFOR, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

By [Gillian Parker](#)

4 minute read March 23, 2022

No single country met the latest World Health Organisation's (WHO) PM<sub>2.5</sub> annual air quality guideline, according to a [new report](#) that analysed real-time air quality from thousands of monitoring stations in 117 countries.

Fine particle pollution 2.5 micrometres in size, known as PM<sub>2.5</sub>, is considered the most harmful, widely monitored air pollutant and has been found to be a major contributing factor to health effects such as asthma, stroke, heart and lung diseases.

Found in vehicle exhaust, wildfires from crop burning and power plant emissions, PM<sub>2.5</sub> contributes to millions of premature deaths every year.

Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/all-countries-are-failing-to-hit-minimum-air-quality-benchmarks-report/>





## Chemists cook up way to remove microplastics using okra



By Agence France-Presse

March 23, 2022



In this file photo taken on July 11, 2012, a Palestinian farmer packs crates of okra, also know as lady's fingers, onto the back of a truck in a field close to the village of Ya'bad in the Israeli occupied West Bank. AFP PHOTO

**WASHINGTON, D.C.:** Extracts of okra and other slimy plants commonly used in cooking can help remove dangerous microplastics from wastewater, scientists said on Tuesday.

The new research was presented at the spring meeting of the American Chemical Society, and offers an alternative to the synthetic chemicals currently used in treatment plants that can themselves pose risks to health.

"In order to go ahead and remove microplastic or any other type of materials, we should be using natural materials which are non-toxic," lead investigator Rajani Srinivasan, of Tarleton State University, said in an explainer video.

Okra is used as a thickening agent in many cuisines, such as Gumbo, a stew from Louisiana. It's also a staple of cuisine in South Asia, where it's called bhindi.

Srinivasan's past research had examined how the goo from okra and other plants could remove textile-based pollutants from water and even microorganisms, and she wanted to see if that would equally apply to microplastics.



## Chemists cook up way to remove microplastics using okra

Ingested microplastics — defined as pieces five millimeters or smaller — have been shown to harm fish in several ways, from disrupting their reproductive systems to stunting growth and causing liver damage.

The source of microplastics is the estimated eight billion tons of plastic produced since the 1950s, less than 10 percent of which has been recycled.

The rest eventually breaks down and is today found in every corner of the globe, from oceans and waterways to the air and soil, as well as our food.

It is feared there could be health impacts on humans, though more research is needed.

Microplastics can also be carcinogenic and mutagenic, meaning they can potentially increase risks of cancer and DNA mutations.

Typical wastewater treatment removes microplastics in two steps.

First, those that float are skimmed off the top of the water. These however account for only a small fraction, and the rest are removed using flocculants, or sticky chemicals that attract microplastics into larger clumps.

The clumps sink to the bottom and can then be separated from the water.

The problem is that these synthetic flocculants, such as polyacrylamide, can break down into toxic chemicals.

So, Srinivasan and colleagues set about investigating how extracts of supermarket-bought okra, aloe, cactus, and fenugreek, tamarind and psyllium would perform.

They tested chains of carbohydrates, known as polysaccharides, from the individual plants, as well as in combination, on various microplastic-contaminated water, examining before and after microscopic images to determine how many particles had been removed.

They found that polysaccharides from okra paired with those from fenugreek could best remove microplastics from ocean water, while polysaccharides from okra paired with tamarind worked best in freshwater samples.

Overall, the plant-based polysaccharides worked just as well or better than polyacrylamide. Crucially, the plant-based chemicals are both non-toxic and can be used in existing treatment plants.

Ultimately, said Srinivasan, she hopes to scale up and commercialize the process, enabling greater access to clean and safer drinking water.

## Costly and technical reporting: key barriers for Indigenous people in carbon trading

On the sidelines of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Geneva, Indigenous peoples leader Jennifer Tauli Corpuz talks to Eco-Business about the challenges of earning from carbon trading in Asia and the Pacific.

The Kalanguya Indigenous people protect the forests and watersheds of Nueva Vizcaya in the Cordillera Administrative Region in northern Philippines: Image: [Yves Picq, CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

By [Hannah Alcosoba Fernandez](#)

4 minute read March 23, 2022

Even if more countries and corporations are allowed to partially meet their climate targets by buying carbon credits that represent emissions cuts made elsewhere, the scheme rarely benefits Indigenous people who safeguard biodiverse areas in the Asia Pacific region.

“[This is due to the] very technical and very costly procedure for Indigenous communities to prove that they are reducing emissions—a requirement of carbon traders when purchasing offsets,” said Jennifer Tauli Corpuz, director for policy of Nia Tero, a United States-based foundation that works alongside Indigenous peoples around the globe. Nia Tero is among those pushing for stronger Indigenous rights at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is currently being negotiated in Geneva.



Jennifer Tauli Corpuz, director for policy, Nia Tero

Speaking to Eco-Business from the Swiss city, Corpuz said carbon traders who purchase offsets often require complicated formulas and expensive technology like satellite-based remote sensors, which are not accessible to Indigenous people.

Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/costly-and-technical-reporting-key-barriers-for-indigenous-people-in-carbon-trading/>



## Are carbon markets killing conservation?

As money pours into nature-based projects to store carbon as governments and companies pursue net-zero targets, efforts to conserve animal and plant species risk being sidelined.



A Raffles' banded langur, a critically endangered monkey in Singapore. The carbon trading gold rush has shifted the focus away from preventing the extinction of animal and plant species that could play a critical role in the fight against climate change. Image: [Sheau Torng Lim/Flickr](#)

By [Robin Hicks](#)

7 minute read March 23, 2022

When a troop of Raffles' banded langurs travels from peat to dryland forest, as they like to do in the rainy season, they move from an area of high to low carbon value. This seasonal migration could, in theory, put these monkeys at risk of extinction.

Conservationists contend that the carbon offset market boom is prioritising the protection of peatland forests potentially at the cost of wildlife such as these critically endangered primates.

Areas siphoned off and preserved for their carbon value, risks displacing efforts to protect biodiversity. This troubles conservationists.

Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/are-carbon-markets-killing-conservation/>



## US, int'l group join hands to build resilient coastal communities in PH in the next 5 years

Published March 22, 2022, 4:59 PM  
by [Betheena Unite](#)

The US Peace Corps has renewed its pact with international non-government organization Rare to build resilient and sustainable coastal communities in the Philippines over the next five years.



(Photo courtesy of the US Embassy in the Philippines)

“The US Peace Corps is pleased to be renewing its partnership with Rare to build resilient and sustainable coastal communities in the Philippines. Together, we can restore and protect marine habitats and promote sustainable fisheries management,” US Peace Corps Country Director Jenner Edelman said.

Both sides signed a new five-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) on March 18.

“Our continued collaboration with the US Peace Corps will amplify how sustainable fishing behaviors actually improve fish stock productivity, and enable us to continue co-designing and sharing innovative, practical solutions with LGU (local government units) partners to protect the country’s marine environment,” Rare Philippines Senior Director Lito Mancao said.

The MOU signing happened during the week-long US Peace Corps-led training on community-based coastal resource management for office heads, fisheries and agricultural officers, and environment officers from LGUs that have a coastal resource management program.

Representatives from 29 LGUs from across the Philippines joined the event, according to the US Embassy in the Philippines.



## US, int'l group join hands to build resilient coastal communities in PH in the next 5 years

The training was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It is the first of a series of USAID-supported capacity development workshops planned for this year that will help local partners protect biodiversity in the Philippines.

The US Peace Corps is conducting a second training on zero-waste programming for youth councils (Sangguniang Kabataan) and their LGU counterparts this week, from March 21 to 25 in Bohol.

The US Peace Corps is the US government's premier volunteer organization and has supported Filipino communities across the country for more than 60 years.

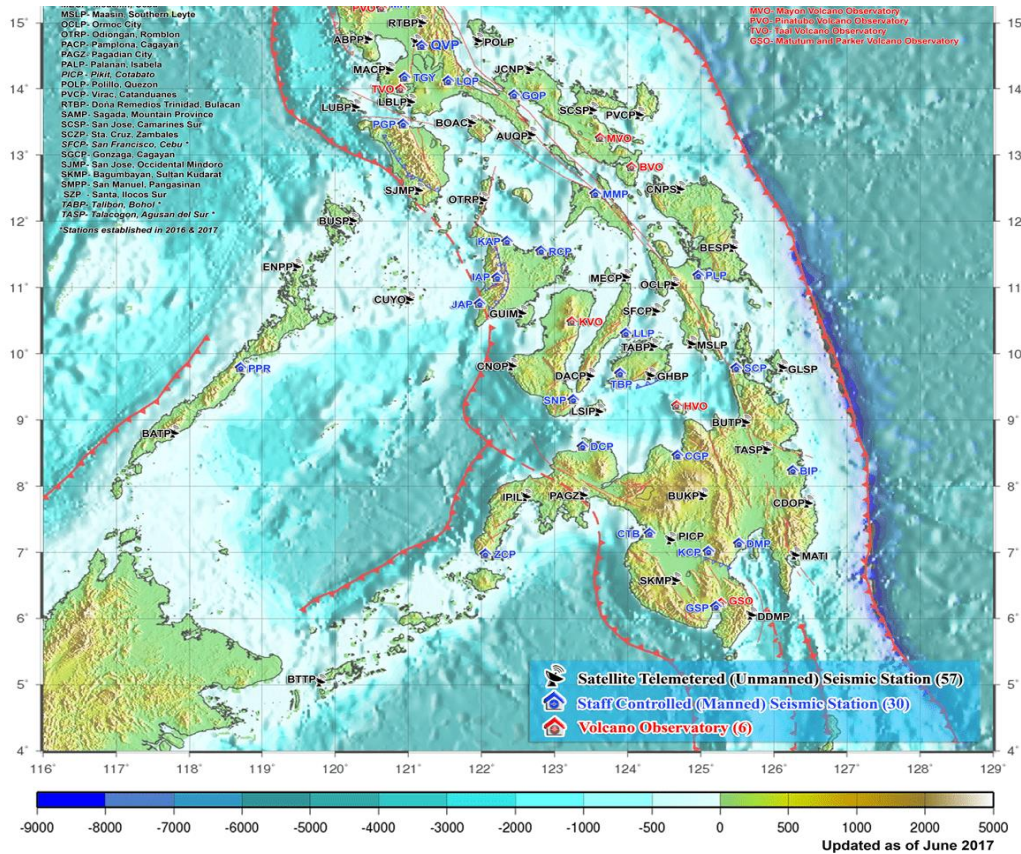
Over 9,300 American volunteers have served as co-teachers, youth development facilitators, or in other roles requested by host communities over the decades.

To date, around 300 Peace Corps volunteers have supported improved coastal resource management in the Philippines.





## Publiko, pinaghahanda sa mas malakas na lindol kasunod ng paggalaw ng Leyte Island fault line



March 23, 2022 @ 7:00 PM 11 hours ago

PALO, Letye – Inihayag ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) na ang paggalaw kamakailan ng Leyte Island fault line ay isang paalala sa publiko na maghanda sa mas malakas na lindol.

Ang Leyte Island fault line ay bahagi ng 1,200-kilometer-long Philippine fault zone, isang pangunahing tectonic feature na nasa buong Philippine archipelago mula hilagang-kanluran ng Luzon hanggang timog-silangan ng Mindanao.

Ayon kay Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum, ang magnitude 5.3 na lindol sa Burauen, Leyte noong Marso 21 ay inaasahan na kasunod ng nangyaring lindol sa Leyte noong 2017.

“We should take these earthquake occurrences as a reminder that we need to prepare for strong earthquakes. We don’t know if this will be succeeded by big events,” ani Solidum.

Noong Hulyo 6, 2017, nang yanigin ng magnitude 6.5 na lindol ang Ormoc City at ang bayan ng Kanaga sa Leyte kung saan hindi bababa sa apat ang nasawi at higit 100 ang nasakatan.





## Publiko, pinaghahanda sa mas malakas na lindol kasunod ng paggalaw ng Leyte Island fault line

“Burauen is the south of epicenter in 2017 and this is the segment that we were expecting activities after the Ormoc. When the fault moves, it transfers some stress to neighboring segments,” aniya.

Noong 2018, nagbabala na ang Phivolcs ng posibleng malakas na lindol sa central Leyte lalo’t ang Philippine fault sa probinsya ay hindi kailanman umuga sa loob ng mahigit 100 taon.

Naobserbahan din ng ahensaya na ang 100 metrong bahagi ng Philippine fault system mula Albuera papuntang Mahaplag ay hinog na para sa isang malakas na lindol. **RNT/ JCM**

Source: <https://www.remate.ph/publiko-pinaghahanda-sa-mas-malakas-na-lindol-kasunod-ng-paggalaw-ng-leyte-island-fault-line/>

24 MARCH 2022, Thursday



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TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## Take part in Earth Hour, DENR urges Pinoys

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has urged Filipinos to take part in the world-wide Earth Hour event on March 26 by switching off computers, television sets, air conditioners and non-essential lights from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Environment Secretary Jim Sampulna, how-

ever, said that beyond the symbolic switching off of lights for an hour, Filipinos must also adopt a sustainable and environmentally responsible "new normal" lifestyle.

"Sustainability should already be a lifestyle and a common goal for each Filipino... Climate change is no longer a foreign term for all of us. With all the typhoons and disasters we

Turn to Page 3

have experienced in the past, I hope that Filipinos are already conscious and responsible towards taking care of the environment," Sampulna said in a statement.

In April 2021, the Philippine government, through the DENR, submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change where the country pledged a projected greenhouse gas emissions reduction and avoidance of 75 percent, of which 2.71 percent is unconditional and 72.29 percent conditional, for the period 2020-2030.

To combat some of the country's pressing environmental challenges, Sampulna said the DENR is committed to enforcing environmental laws, including the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 and Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

The DENR will also strengthen its National Greening Program while continuing to protect 8.7 million hectares of forests and conserving the country's protected areas and the biodiversity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Sampulna, however, admitted that the "ambitious goal" of 75 percent reduction and avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions "cannot be achieved with the government doing the work alone

and if people continue their unsustainable practices that significantly harm nature."

He said Filipinos can do their share in combating climate change through sustainable lifestyle such as using bicycles and mass transport vehicles as well carpooling, especially amid the fuel price hikes.

Sampulna also reminded the public to conserve water, especially during the dry season. Moreover, for the next elections, he encouraged voters to choose leaders who will prioritize climate mitigation.

"Apart from these, individuals can contribute to saving the planet by eating more sustainably, not wasting food, reducing plastic usage, being energy-efficient, being a conscious consumer, being supportive of the government's environmental programs, being environmental ambassadors in their sphere of influence," he added.

The Earth Hour movement, organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature, started in Sydney, Australia in 2007 and has become an annual symbolic action around the world, spreading to over 7,000 cities and 180 countries and territories.





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Other prospective groundwater sources eyed

**THE government has started studying other prospective locations for groundwater sources amid the challenges posed by climate change, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said.**

In a virtual celebration of World Water Day, Acting Environment and Natural Resources Sec. Jim Sampulna stressed the need to ensure a sustainable supply of clean water given that 30 percent of freshwater resources is groundwater, extracted and managed to suffice the needs of the growing global population.

"Groundwater is indeed a crucial resource that requires our management and balancing act between extraction and allowing the recovery and sustainable management of aquifers for long term beneficial use of our people," Sampulna added.

Among the prospective locations

for groundwater sources being studied by the National Water Resources Board are Tagbilaran, Batangas, Cavite, Masbate, Laguna, and Bulacan, the DENR said.

Maynilad president and chief executive officer Ramoncito Fernandez stressed the need to increase discussions on groundwater studies, to ensure an equitable supply of drinking water for future generations.

"With climate change continuing to threaten our water sources, sustainably managing our groundwater sources is critical, we need to make the invisible, visible, by breaking discussions on groundwater protection to the mainstream," Fernandez said.

In the same event, 14 "water champions" in the country were recognized for their exemplary practices in water irrigation, treatment, and urban management.

The DENR said their best practices are vital in combating challenges in increasing demand versus limited supply, poor water quality due to pollution, and climate change, among others.

Besides the World Water Day Awards, the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau-DENR also held its online webinar in line with the celebration.

Senior Science Research specialist Reg Winlove Bungabong stressed the importance of water-treatment management nowadays to ensure access to clean or drinking water.

"Compared to the time of our ancestors where they can easily access drinking water in springs or river. But now, monitoring on our water systems shows there are contaminants in water sources, and we can no longer drink untreated water," Bungabong said.



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

# Manila Standard

AB  
PAGE

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

03-24-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Villar bags DENR award for environmental advocacies

SEN. Cynthia Villar was conferred on Wednesday a government award for her environmental advocacies including solid waste management, sustainable tourism, and community development.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) handed the award to the senator in rites held at the Radisson North EDSA in Quezon City in line with the agency's Gawad Taga-Ilog 2.0. Search for the Most Improved Estero in Metro Manila, highlighting observance of the World Water Day.

In her acceptance speech, Villar noted that as an

individual, a legislator and a public servant, these have always been her priorities and advocacies.

The senator has been at the forefront of maintaining a healthy environment, especially now that the world faces a global health crisis.

She has likewise been making strides for the realization of water sustainability. Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, recalled that "four years ago on this day in 2018, together with the Manila Bay Site Coordinating Management Office and all other

organizations, the DENR-NCR also awarded

me as "Kampeon ng Katubigan" for my efforts in leading the protection of bodies of water such as the Las Piñas Zapote River and the Las Piñas Parañaque Wetland Park."

"Eleven years ago, in 2011, I also received an award for the river rehabilitation program. I started in my home city- the Sagip Ilog program. It bested other initiatives from 38 other countries and won the United Nations Water for Life Best Water Management Practices during World Water Day celebration in Zaragoza, Spain," also said Villar. **Macon Ramos-Araneta**





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE



B/2  
PAGE

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

03-24-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Maynilad honors water, environment champions

WEST Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad), together with the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), honored 14 water and environment champions at the recent World Water Day PH Awards 2022 (WWD.PH Awards) held virtually as the culminating event of the country's week-long celebration of World Water Day.

For more than five years now, the WWD.PH Awards has been a platform for honoring champions for water and the environment – individuals, institutions, and programs that have contributed to achieving water and water-environment sustainability in the Philippines. Each WWD.PH-participating government agency and private company submits their nominees, which are then screened and vetted by a multi-organization committee before being included in the list of awardees.

Maynilad's "Water Warrior Awardee" for this year was the Paranaque City Environment and Natural Resource Office for actively promoting proper wastewater management through an ordinance establishing a septage management system in the City of Paranaque.

The NWRB's "Water Wise Awards" went to Coca-Cola Beverage Philippines for its Reduce, Reuse, Replen-

ish program, and the Local Government of Pavia, Iloilo and Pavia National School, which served as the pilot location for the NWRB's Groundwater Management Plan.

The Local Water Utilities Administration's "Huwaring Lingkod Tubig Award" recipients were Puerto Princesa City Water District in Palawan, Bayawan Water District in Negros Oriental, and San Francisco Water District in Agusan del Sur.

The Damayan Irrigators Association, Inc., PPAT-TABA Irrigators Association, Inc., and Silway 7-Klinan 6 Communal Irrigators Association, Inc. were named the "Most Outstanding Irrigator's Associations" by the National Irrigators Association.

Efforts in protecting the Laguna de Bay were also recognized through the Laguna Lake Development Authority's "Kampeon ng Lawa Awards", which were given to the local government of Morong, Rizal, the Muntinlupa City Lake Management Office's paddle wheel project, and Rev. Msgr. Jerry Veluz Bitoon, Rector of San Pablo Cathedral, in San Pablo City.

Completing the roster of honorees were Metro Pacific Water's "Kampeon ng Kalikasan" awardee Metro Iloilo Water District, and Aboitiz InfraCapital's "Agos ng Kinabukasan" awardee Metro Lipa Water District.





## Invest more for 'social good' — SMC

SAN Miguel Corp. (SMC) is calling on the business sector to invest more for the "social good."

The call was made by SMC president and CEO Ramon S. Ang during a gathering on Wednesday by advocates and representatives of organizations for environment protection at the La Mesa Watershed in Quezon City for the blessing and inauguration of the Million Trees Foundation Inc. (MTFI) Nursery and Eco Learning Center.

Ang who was guest of honor and speaker for the event said businessmen should take the initiative to invest more on projects that will benefit more people.

"Businesses should not always be about profit," he said as he urged the other concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS)—Manila Water and Maynilad—to invest on the environment.

Addressing representatives from Manila Water and Maynilad, he said: "I am challenging you to tell your bosses, Enrique Razon and [Manuel V.] Pangilinan, to invest in the environment. If you can't tell them that, I will tell them."

MTFI Chairman Emeritus and former MWSS administrator and chairman Gen. Reynaldo V. Velasco (ret.) described RSA as a visionary and a humble person despite his prominence in the business community. His love for nature and for the environment is very evident in the environmental projects he pursues. "I still have to see a businessman who will invest on his own in clearing a very big river like Tullahan in support of the project of DENR," Velasco said.

The Nursery and Eco Learning Center is an essential component of MFTI programs that will ensure the sustainability of the MWSS Annual Million Trees Challenge (AMTC) through the years.

The AMTC has successfully reached its target with 5.2 million



**RSA IS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.** SMC president Ramon S. Ang and former MWSS chairman Reynaldo Velasco lead the inauguration of the Million Trees Foundation Nursery and Eco Learning Center at the La Mesa Watershed in Novaliches, Quezon City.

trees over five years.

These trees were planted in the seven critical watersheds notably La Mesa, Ipo, Angat, Upper Marikina, Umiray, Kaliwa, Laguna Lake and Manila Bay that affect the water supply in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces in the service area of MWSS. Planting of 10 million more trees until 2030 is in the pipeline.





# S. Cotabato gov: Keep ban on open-pit mining

## Tampakan copper-gold project faces roadblock as exec asks prov'l board to retain 12-year-old policy in environment code

By **Bong S. Sarmiento**  
@InqNational

KORONADAL CITY—South Cotabato Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr. has endorsed a proposal to keep the provincial government's ban on open-pit mining amid current moves to reverse it.

The now 12-year-old policy stands in the way of the \$5.9-billion Tampakan mining project which seeks to tap into the largest undeveloped copper-gold minefield in Southeast Asia.

Tamayo, in a March 10 letter, endorsed a resolution of the Provincial Development Council (PDC) favoring the retention of the open-pit mining ban to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (provincial board), which is hearing petitions to have the controversial policy lifted.

Tamayo chairs the PDC, which is composed of mayors, members of the House of Representatives and nongovernment organizations in the province.

The open-pit mining ban is contained in the Provincial Environment Code approved in 2010, erecting a policy roadblock to the operation of the Tampakan mining tenement covering some 10,000 hectares across the provinces of South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and Davao del Sur. Much of the mining extraction activities, however, are in South Cotabato.

The 25-year contract to mine the area was granted on March 22, 1995, to Australian firm Western Mining Corp. (WMC). The



rights, however, had been transferred to Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI) in 2001.

The 1995 contract, which expired on March 21, 2020, was extended in 2016 by another 12 years. Under the law, the project can still be granted another 25-year term.

The move to have the policy lifted by the provincial legislature follows the recent decision by a local court upholding the legality of the environment code provision.

### 'Welcome move'

A similar resolution was also passed by other multisectoral governance bodies in the province.

"May this request warrant the preferential attention of this honorable body," Tamayo said in his letter to the provincial board.

Rene Pamplona, a resident

of South Cotabato and chair of Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), welcomed Tamayo's endorsement of the PDC resolution to the provincial board.

"This is a welcome move as it represents the sentiments of the stakeholders in the province. We commend the provincial government for heeding the demands of the residents of South Cotabato. We have been anxious that by reviewing the ban on open-pit mining, the provincial government would cave in to a corporate lobby. We are happy it stood with the people," Pamplona said in a statement.

"We call on the Sanggunian Panlalawigan of South Cotabato to listen to the clamor of the people as represented by the PDC. As officials directly elected by the people, the [board] must heed the call to uphold the ban on open-pit mining in the province," said Jaybee Garganera,





03-24-22

TITLE: S. Cotabato gov: Keep ban on open pit

PAGE 2

DATE

mining

ATM national coordinator.

Pamplona said that "the ban on open-pit mining is for the protection and for the general welfare of the people of South Cotabato."

At least 93,453 signatures opposing the lifting of the open-pit mining method have been submitted to the provincial board. The signature campaign was led by the local Catholic Church.

**Most viable way**

SMI earlier revealed in a study that the most viable way to extract the minerals is through open-pit mining.

The Tampakan project has the potential to yield an average of 375,000 tons of copper and 360,000 ounces of gold in concentrate per annum in the 17-year life of the mine.

SMI firm has repeatedly vowed to employ "responsible mining" in the Tampakan project.

The Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC), which campaigned for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, stressed that "only the ban stands in the way of the Tampakan project, one of the largest open-pit projects in Asia that residents fear will destroy the environment."

"This resolution is a good sign that the provincial government itself will eventually uphold the open-pit ban enshrined in the landmark environmental code of South Cotabato," said Maya Quirino, the LRC advocacy coordinator. INQ





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## S. Cotabato devt council affirms ban on open-pit mining method

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

**T**HE Provincial Development Council (PDC) of South Cotabato has upheld the ban on open-pit mining method, a policy that hinders the operation of the Tampakan Copper-Gold Project.

Anti-mining advocates hailed the PDC's move. This even as the provincial government of South Cotabato is set to make a decision in the coming weeks whether to reverse the ban it had instituted in 2010.

In a resolution approved on March 9, 2022, PDC said, "the environmental and social impacts of the open-pit mining method outweigh economic gains."

In upholding the ban, the PDC cited the "one health" theory, or "an approach that recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment."

Governor Reynaldo Tamayo Jr.,

who also sits as chairman of the PDC, approved the resolution.

"This resolution is a good sign that the provincial government itself will eventually uphold the open-pit ban enshrined in the landmark environmental code of South Cotabato. We hope that the province will take its cue from the Provincial Development Council, which has chosen to prioritize the environment and well-being of people," said Maya Quirino, advocacy coordinator of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC).

The Tampakan Copper-Gold Project (TCGP), which covers an area the size of the city of Manila, straddles four provinces. Environmentalists said its operation threatens watershed systems that may have dire consequences to people and the environment in South Cotabato and contiguous areas.

A risk-mapping assessment by the Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) and World Resources Institute found that TCGP "belongs

to an area of high ecological values [which comprise protected areas, primary forests, mangroves, and Unesco World Heritage Sites], high groundwater vulnerability [very likely affecting groundwater quantity and quality], medium-high vulnerability to watershed stress, medium social vulnerability [based on functional literacy, welfare and NGO/people's organization membership], and high seismic risk."

The mining project covers an area of around 10,000 hectares, portions of which include rainforests and agricultural land that will be cleared for the project. This, according to the same ESSC study, "will remove topsoil and destroy wildlife in an area with high unique biodiversity, with over 1,000 floral species and 280 recorded fauna species, of which 30 percent are endemic to the Philippines, and over 50 species are already under threat of extinction. The excavation itself will break into, disrupt, de-water and de-grade the aquifer in the area."



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8  
PAGE

UPPER  
 LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

03-24-22

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_



**READY FOR WATER SHORTAGE** – A man fills up water containers in Tondo, Manila, on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. The National Water Resources Board (NWRD) will decide next week on the water allocation in Metro Manila amid warnings of a possible water shortage in the coming months. (Ali Vicoy)





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## MAGING RESPONSABLE AT BIGYANG HALAGA ANG TUBIG

ANG Pilipinas ay nakikiisa sa paggunita ng "World Water Day" na ang tema ngayong taon ay "Groundwater: Making the invisible visible" o pagbibigay-pansin sa lumalalang pang-aabuso sa pangangailangan sa malinis na tubig.

Kung hindi mabibigyang-pansin ang masamang kalagayan ng mga "ground water" sa maraming panig ng mundo, naniniwala ang UNDP o ang United Nations Development Program na ito ang magiging mitsa ng isang matinding digmaan – pag-aaway dahil sa pangangailangan sa malinis na tubig inumin.

Hindi dahil archipelagic country ang Pilipinas ay lig-

tas na tayo sa matinding pagkauhaw. Dulot na rin ng polusyon at kapabayaang, manipis na ang reserbang tubig malinis sa ilalim ng ating kalupaan.

Noong nakaraang Linggo, pormal nang sinabi ng PAGASA na nagsimula na ang "summer" sa bansa dahil sa pagtatapos ng pagbugso ng hanging amihan.

At sa mga panahong ganito, lubhang kailangan natin ang suplay ng malinis na tubig sa ating mga tahanan o mga pagawaan.

Ang panawagan ni Dr. Seville David Jr., Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), "bigyang-halaga ang tubig. Madali nating itapon sa ngayon, pero lubhang mahalaga



sa hinaharap".

Base sa ulat ng PAGASA, ang antas ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 192.78 metro sa araw ng Marso 23, 2022, (6:00am). Sa Ipo Dam nasa 98.90 at sa La Mesa Dam nasa 78.53.

Nakikiisa rin ang Pilipinas sa paggunita ng "World Meteorological Day" sa pangunguna ng WMO o ng World Meteorological Organization na nagsimula pa noong taong 1961.

Ang tema ngayong taon ay "Early Warning and Early Action" na pagbibigay-pansin sa kahalagahan ng hydro-meteorological and climate information for disaster risk

reduction.

Kinikilala na ng halos 99% ng mga mamamayan ng mundo ang katotohanan ng climate change and global warming.

Sa maraming pag-kakataon ay nakita na natin ang bangis ng mapaminsalang mga bagyo, tsunami, mas matinding taglamig at tag-init.

Maraming tao ang napipinsala gayundin ang balance ng daigdig.

Hindi na lamang basta dapat ipinaalam ang kalagayan ng panahon kundi dapat ang epekto nito, paghahanda para rito at mga pamamaraan para makaligtas at makibagay.





TITLE:

PAGE

## Nuclear power plants



DUTY CALLS  
FLORENCIO  
FIANZA

THREE months before President Duterte leaves office, he did two things that might have significant impact not only on our environment but the safety of many Filipinos. He signed an Executive Order adding nuclear power into the mix of options for the country's future generating capacity. He also approved the recommendation of the DENR to authorize the resumption of open-pit mining that will further destroy our environment which has already been heavily degraded as a result of more than 100 years of mining.

Nuclear power has been a very controversial issue ever since the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant was mothballed by the first Aquino administration due to, among others, corruption and safety considerations.

The country however, pledged to do its part in limiting the increase of global temperature to not more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is done by replacing fossil fuel with renewable energy like wind and solar. It is no secret that most of the power plants that were constructed in the recent past are coal-powered, principally because they are cheaper to build.

Nuclear power, however, is one that does not emit harmful gasses into the atmosphere. The big question is, should the country be embracing this considering that we are right in the middle of the so-called ring of fire? Earthquakes in the country are a dime a dozen and many are moderately strong. The mothballed BNPP is also right

in a densely populated area like Metro Manila where majority of the population in the Island of Luzon reside. What happens if a very strong earthquake like the one that struck Fukushima, Japan in 2011 strikes near the BNPP? Fukushima is still a wasteland like Chernobyl in Ukraine.

*"We should learn from what happened in Japan."*

Just a few days ago a 7.4-magnitude earthquake hit northern Japan – again, near a nuclear power plant – killing four people. This prompted some Japanese lawmakers to question if it is still wise to reactivate the other Japanese nuclear power plants that were closed as a result of the 2011 earthquake.

It's not only earthquakes that we should fear but also a nuclear power plant accident like a reactor meltdown. Where will all the Filipinos evacuate in case of a nuclear power plant accident? We have to remember that we are a densely populated country.

In spite of the obvious dangers, there are many who still would like to fast track nuclear power development in the country. Do they realize that there is hardly any place to put up a nuclear power plant that is far from population centers in this country? The best arguments of nuclear power proponents are that nuclear technology has improved tremendously over the years and that it should be safe to put up nuclear power plants even in a country like the Philippines. This may be so, but I would not be betting too much on this.

What happened in Japan should be a warning to us. The Japanese are so safety conscious but none-

theless, they were not able to tame the wrath and fury of a natural disaster that devastated their country and killed about 16,000 people.

We should go easy on nuclear power.

Last week, the first mining license was also issued. Prospective foreign investors must be singing happy days are here again. Open-pit mining will now follow which will level many of our mountains. It is incomprehensible why our government continues to embrace open pit mining that destroys irreplaceable mountains. There is no such thing as responsible mining. Once a mountain is leveled to the ground, it's gone forever. It can never be restored, which should be food for thought to our government officials.

\*\*\*

Last week, former President Fidel V Ramos celebrated his 94th birthday. As part of the celebration, his Presidential Library was inaugurated virtually. This will open all his papers collected from 1950 when he graduated from West Point up to the time when left the presidency in 1998 to the public. Needless to say, this library will be a veritable gold mine for academic researchers looking for answers about events that transpired in the country in the last fifty years wherein President Ramos was a participant.

Not much has been heard about him the past two years due to the pandemic. It might interest his friends, admirers and loyal followers to know that he is alert and doing well for a man of his age. But his forced isolation is understandably hard on a man who likes to meet and socialize with friends. Due to his age however, social distancing from friends and well-wishers is what his doctors want him to do. So, to all his friends and loyal followers, the Boss is OK.





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## Editorial

### Bike infrastructure is a traffic solution, not an obstacle

**S**AN MIGUEL Corp. chairman Ramon S. Ang ruffled quite a few public feathers recently when he offered the opinion, "*Ang problema lamang sa EDSA, traffic, is because of the bicycle lane. In other countries, bicycle lanes are on the sidewalk. Tayo ginawana natin sa gitna ng highway (The only problem with EDSA, traffic, is because of the bicycle lane. In other countries, bicycle lanes are on the sidewalk. We made it in the middle of the highway).*"

Confronted by angry online commenters pointing out the basic ridiculousness of his comments, Ang later walked them back, clarifying that he believes expanding and improving infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians is important. He suggested, for example, that a bike/pedestrian lane along EDSA could be elevated, providing safety for its users and, presumably, preventing it from being a nuisance to motor vehicle traffic along the nation's busiest thoroughfare.

To be fair to the SMC chief, he has repeatedly championed including bicycle lanes in road infrastructure projects in recent years, although the nation's busiest developer has not yet found an opportunity to turn the sentiment into reality. One of Ang's more interesting ideas, which we would hope would find an application in the near future, is to construct bicycle lanes using recycled plastic, a grossly underutilized resource the Philippines has in undesirable abundance.

While we believe that building more and better road infrastructure is both productive and necessary, and that the Duterte administration's Build, Build, Build program should be continued by the next administration in some form, we also believe the cultural and policy perspective toward bicycles and other "non-motorized" infrastructure must change. Bicycle lanes and associated infrastructure such as safe parking should no longer be considered a non-essential option in infrastructure planning and development, but a requirement to be properly integrated into every project possible.

It is a matter of simple calculus. Bicycles require no fuel and produce no emissions, are relatively inexpensive, and require much less road space than needed for a comparable number of cars or even tricycles, thus reducing rather than aggravating traffic congestion. As many bicycle users have pointed out, in highly congested areas such as most of Metro Manila, traveling by bike is generally faster than traveling by car or public transportation.

Naturally, there are some limitations; not everyone can use a bicycle instead of some other means of transportation, and whether or not it is an option depends on one's circumstances. However, it is very likely that many more people would use bicycles if they were encouraged to do so by the provision of safe, accessible infrastructure for it.

**"Bicycle lanes and associated infrastructure such as safe parking should no longer be considered a non-essential option in infrastructure planning and development, but a requirement to be properly integrated into every project possible."**

Integrating bicycle lanes — which would also double as safe space for pedestrians — into new road infrastructure projects is fairly easy, and could be ensured by a simple order by the government that any project proposal include them, except in instances where it is technically impossible to do so. Retrofitting existing streets and roads, however, is understandably a bigger challenge and in some areas, perhaps an insurmountable one.

Unfortunately, many roads, particularly in Metro Manila, are not well-designed, not even for the volume of motor vehicle traffic they carry, and so carving out space for bike lanes is difficult. Examples of well-intentioned failures in providing bike lanes can be seen in many parts of Metro Manila, where even though lanes are established with special markings, lights, or even physical dividers, they have become clogged with streetside vendors, parked cars, or used as overflow lanes by other traffic. Ironically, the bicycle lane that extends along the outer margins of most of EDSA, the city's busiest and most congested street, is one of safest and most efficient available.

That surprising reality should be taken as a demonstration that creating good bicycle infrastructure is certainly possible, while the high cost of transportation and the negative impact on productivity and the environment of chronic traffic congestion should be taken as a sign that creating the infrastructure is necessary. It will not by itself solve traffic problems, but it will contribute in a substantial way to an eventual solution, and should not be dismissed.





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5  
PAGE

UPPER  
 LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

03-24-22

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## ON THE TOWN

### ZAMBOANGA No live birds allowed

Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco-Salazar has ordered a temporary ban on entries of all live bird species in the city following the reported bird flu cases in some Luzon provinces.

The ban covers ready-to-lay pullets, ducks, quail, embryonated or "balut," manure, and other products and by-products from Luzon and other bird-flu affected areas.

Climaco signed Executive Order 720 on March 16, 2022 mandating the temporary ban on the entry of live birds in the city from March 16 to April 15, 2022.

Under the EO, the public is enjoined to report mortality and unusual disease afflicting poultry birds, ducks, and pet birds to the Veterinary Services field offices.

People are further instructed not to handle and consume poultry, ducks, and quails, which died from unknown causes.

Residents are also requested to avoid contact with resident, wild, and migratory birds in their areas.

The mayor has directed concerned government personnel to implement strict border control in all entry points of the city in line with the executive order. (Liza Abubakar-Jocson)





03-24-22

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# Environment remains Legarda priority

BY MICHELLE R. GUILLANG

Antique Representative Loren Legarda on Wednesday bared her top priority programs and public services she would like to improve as she seeks a return to the Senate.

"First of all, in my three terms as Senator, you will see my legislative agenda and the platforms that I have achieved from 1998 to 2019," Legarda said at a Catholic E-Forum over Radio Veritas 846.

A known foremost advocate of green development, protecting the environment remains Legarda's top priority program.

Legarda, a three-term senator, has authored ten environment laws, including the Ecological Solid Waste Management Law, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Renewable Energy Law and the Climate Change Act.

Among these laws, the veteran lawmaker said she is most proud of the enactment of the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS), which aims to conserve and protect the country's rich biological diversity and ecosystems.

"I am very proud of E-NIPAS because 240 protected areas from the Cordillera to the Autonomous Region have been declared protected and the government is mandated to conserve it and enrich it," she said.

Legarda vowed to continue improving the education system in the country.

"When I was the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Finance, I am happy that I was able to be the co-author of the Free College Education Law, quality tertiary education. This provides free education to students at state universities and colleges as well as local government colleges. We have also earmarked a budget to our medical students," she said.

"Imagine if we were not able to pass this bill into law, the pandemic would have made it harder for the families to send their children to college," she added.

Legarda promised to push for bills to improve the existing Universal Health Care Law.

"God-willing, if we will be able to return to the Senate, we will strengthen this law and improve its implementation to our public health care system. We will not just prioritize infrastructures, but the equipment and the competence of our healthcare workers," she said.



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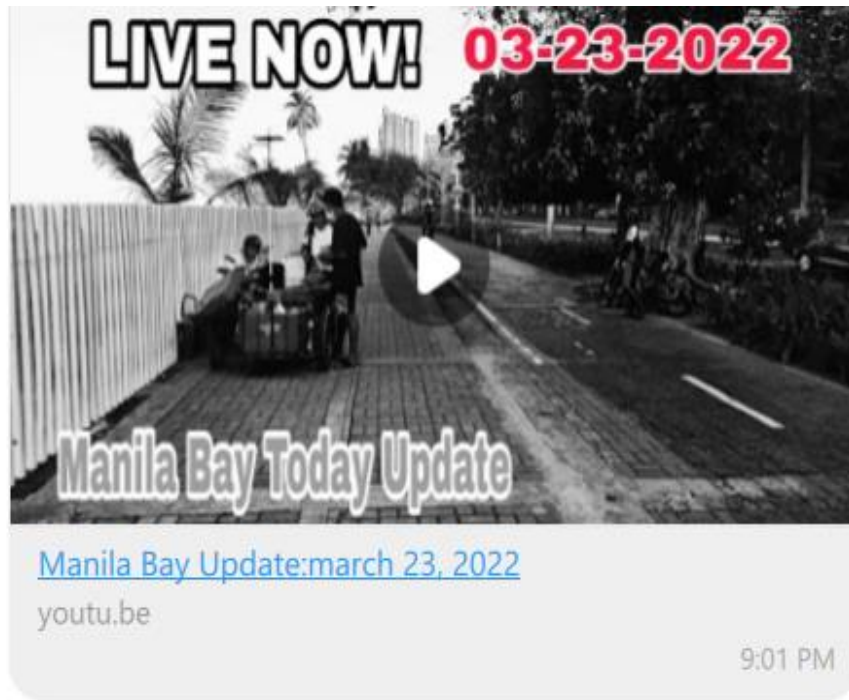


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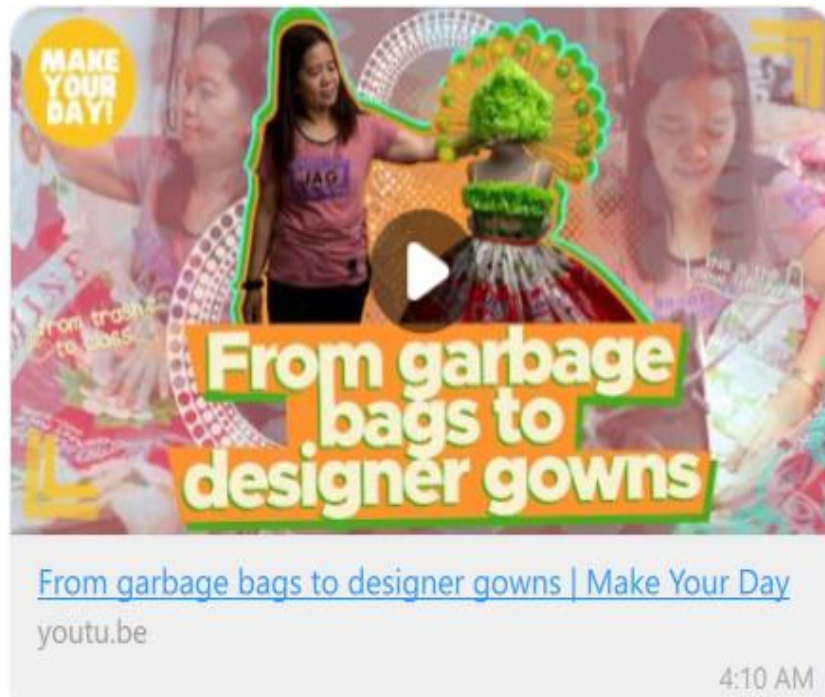
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



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