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DENR for Sustainable Tourism Development

Thursday, March 24, 2022 Journal Online



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna (4th from left) joins representatives from the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) led by Chief Operating Officer Maria Anthonette C. Velasco-Allones (3rd from left) in a photo opportunity during their visit to discuss plans to strengthen the country's tourism sector, particularly on promoting sustainable tourism development through the conservation of biodiversity and contributing to climate action. Also in photo are (from L-R): TPB Domestic Promotions Department Acting Head Marivic M. Sevilla, TPB Marketing and Promotions Acting Deputy Chief Operating Officer Teresita DL. Landan, DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) OIC Director Natividad Y. Bernardino, **DENR**-BMB Division Chief Meriden Maranan, TPB Marketing Communications Acting Department Head Anthea Reine Q. Ifurung, and **DENR** Assistant Secretary for Administration and Human Resources Hiro V. Masuda.



DENR chief commends San Miguel

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA MARCH 24, 2022



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna has commended San Miguel Corp. (SMC) for the company's pro-environment programs and projects.

Specifically, the DENR chief lauded SMC's feat in dredging the 36.4-kilometer Tullahan-Tinajeros River System, one of the 17 principal river systems draining into Manila bay.

"Despite the setback brought about by the pandemic, SMC has proven its dedication in protecting and preserving our environment. We are very grateful for our partnership in securing healthier and cleaner waterways for a better future," he said in a statement.

The partnership between DENR and SMC is part of the Adopt-an-Estero Program – one of the department's priority initiatives and key strategies to comply with the continuing Supreme Court mandamus to clean up Manila Bay.

To recall, then DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu and SMC President and CEO Ramon S. Ang signed a memorandum of agreement on March 14, 2019 for the rehabilitation of the Tullahan-Tinajeros River System.

SMC pledged P1 billion for the dredging and clean-up activities starting from La Mesa Dam in Quezon City and into Manila Bay at Centennial Park in Navotas City.

As of March 10, SMC reported it has finished dredging the portion of the river at Niugan, Malabon City using backhoes and recovered 93,393 cubic meters of dredged materials.

Meanwhile, it continued to conduct dredging operations in some portions of Catmon and Maysilo in Malabon City.

Since starting the project on October 12, 2021, SMC has dredged 155,113 cubic meters in the area and targets to finish the activity by the third week of March 2022.

It had also extended and prioritized the dredging of Sectors 3 and 4 – from Lambingan Bridge to Tinajeros Bridge Catmon/Maysilo in Malabon and from Tinajeros Bridge to Tullahan Bridge Tinajeros, Potrero and Marulas, respectively—to address flooding in these areas during the rainy season.

It has currently dredged 789,951 cubic meters and covered 7.71 kilometers of the river from Sector 1 (Manila Bay to Tonsuya Bridge Bangulasi, Tañong, Longos) to Sector 5 (Tullahan Bridge to NLEX Potrero, Marulas, Gen. T. de Leon).



Sampulna underscored the importance of dredging these areas to improve the quality of water draining into Manila Bay.

“Dredging these areas, which are located close to urban areas and industrial complexes, could help prevent the accumulation of pollutants such as trash, debris, decaying vegetation, and even unwarranted toxic material spills,” Sampulna said.



DENR launches gaming app, mascot to advocate segregation

By Hilda Austria **March 24, 2022, 6:18 pm**



GARBAGE BUSTER MASCOT. ‘Pinas: The Basura Buster’ mascot poses for the attendees of the region wide launch of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources solid waste management advocacy campaign on Thursday (March 24, 2022). An Android-based mobile gaming application was also launched. *(Photo courtesy of John Mark Mangapot)*

CALASIAO, Pangasinan – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) launched on Thursday a mobile gaming application and a mascot to strengthen awareness and implementation of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act among young people.

In an interview, Environmental Management Bureau Ilocos regional director Maria Dorica Naz-Hipe said the Android-based mobile gaming app was designed by DENR for children aged five to eight, especially since they are usually at home.

“They would be able to play with the guidance of their parents. It is both instructional and educational for them to imbibe segregation. For them to learn how to segregate properly,” she said.

She added they plan to team up with the Department of Education to promote the mobile app.

Hipe said the mascot called “Pinas: The Basura Buster Mascot (PBB)” is an icon that symbolizes solid waste management.

“PBB is for the children to see a physical symbol of our advocacy campaign on ecological solid waste management,” she said.

The advocacy campaign launch of DENR was held nationwide.

Meanwhile, Hipe said the Ilocos Region has a high rating in the segregation of wastes.

“They are implementing segregation, especially in the Poblacion areas; however, the problem lies at the interior communities. Nonetheless, the barangay officials are usually in-charge in the enforcement of the segregation of solid wastes,” she said. **(PNA)**



“Champion” sa environmental protection at water sustainability VILLAR KINILALA NG DENR-NCR

March 23, 2022 [jake](#)



BILANG pagkilala sa kanyang natatanging kontribusyon na mapanatiling malinis at malusog ang ating kapaligiran at waterways, awardee si Sen. Cynthia Villar sa 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” sa pagdiriwang ng World Water Day (WWD).

Pinuri rin ng DENR-NCR si Villar sa kanyang adbokasiyang alagaan ang ating natural resources, solid waste management, sustainable tourism at community development.

Sa kanyang Acceptance Speech sa okasyong ginanap sa Radisson North EDSA, Quezon City, iginiit ni Villar na ang mga ito ang palagian niyang prayoridad at adbokasiya bilang isang indibidwal, legislator at public servant.

Nangunguna ang senador sa pagtataguyod sa malusog na kapaligiran lalo na ngayong nahaharap tayo sa isang global health crisis. Pinagsisikapan din niya ang water sustainability.

Ginunita ni Villar, chairperson ng Senate committee on environment and natural resources, na 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,” sabi pa ni Villar.

Naging hamon sa kanya ang mga pagkilalang ito para mas marami pa siyang gawin sa ating kapaligiran.

“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,” ayon kay Villar.



Ipinahayag ng United Nations' International Groundwater Resources Assessment Center (UN-IGRC) na mahalaga ang groundwater na pinagkukunan ng kalahati ng ating iniinom na tubig sa buong mundo. May 40% ng tubig mula rito ang gamit sa irrigated agriculture at 1/3 ng tubig sa mga industriya.

Dahil agrikulturang bansa ang Pilipinas, iginiit ni Villar na importante ang tubig sa ating seguridad sa pagkain.

"We do have to keep on reminding people that water is not an infinite resource and it is in fact getting scarce," ani senador

"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," dagdag pa niya.

Malaking tulong din ang groundwater sa ating ecosystems at sa baseflow ng mga ilog.

"Groundwater is also an important part of climate change adaptation process and is often a solution for people without access to safe water."

Dismayado naman si Villar sa sinabi ng UN-IGRC tungkol sa kakulangan ng groundwater. May 663 milyon sa buong mundo ang walang malinis na inuming tubig sa kabila ng mabilis na pagdami ng tao.

"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. (ESTONG REYES)



Owl, 85 turtle hatchlings released in Zamboanga del Norte

March 24, 2022

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro)-Manukan, Zamboanga del Norte, released last week a Philippine grass owl and 85 olive ridley turtle hatchlings in that province.

DENR Information Officer Rosevirico Tan said Thursday, March 24, that the grass owl was successfully retrieved after Cenro-Manukan received a report through social media from Mark Anthony Realista about the wildlife in their area.

Tan said the owl, upon physical examination, was found to be in good condition and was released back to its natural habitat at Cogon Ecotourism Park in Dipolog City, the capital of Zamboanga del Norte.

Meanwhile, Tan said the turtle hatchlings were part of the translocated marine turtle eggs by Cenro-Manukan on January 15, 2022, due to high risk factors in its original nesting site.

He said the turtle hatchlings successfully hatched and released in the coast of Dohinob village, Roxas, Zamboanga del Norte.

The DENR encouraged the public to immediately report any wildlife concerns to its nearest field office for the proper handling, rescue and retrieval operations.

The public may call or send text to the DENR's hotline at 0948-147-1250. **(SunStar Zamboanga)**



NWRB di muna magbabawas ng alokasyon ng tubig mula Angat Dam

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Mar 24 2022 02:06 PM



Nag-iigib ng tubig ang ilang mga residente sa Old Sta. Mesa Maynila noong Nobyembre 1, 2021. *Jonathan Cellona, ABS-CBN News/File*

MAYNILA - Tiniyak ng National Water Resources Board na hindi muna sila magbabawas ng alokasyon ng tubig kahit patuloy na bumababa ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam.

Ayon kay NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr., ito ay dahil patuloy pa rin ang banta ng COVID-19 at kinakailangang sapat ang suplay ng tubig sa mga kabahayan para mabawasan ang banta ng sakit.

"Alam naman natin ang tubig ang isang makakapagpabalang paglaganap [nito] kaya wala po tayong pagbabawas na ginagawa sa ngayon kahit ho medyo mababa ang lebel ng Angat Dam," ani David sa isang panayam sa Teleradyo ngayong Huwebes.

Ayon kay David, nasa 192.48 metro ang taas ng tubig sa Angat Dam, malayo sa high water level nito na 210 meters. Bagay aniya ito na nag-ugat dahil wala masyadong naging pag-ulan noong Disyembre 2021 sa watershed ng dam.

"Patuloy pong bumababa ang lebel ng Angat Dam sa ngayon at nasa 192 meters po siya at kaya mula January, nagpaalala tayo na kailangan natin magtipid at wag aksayahin kas ang gsuto natin may magamit tayo sa tag-init," ani David.

Ang critical level ng Angat ay 160 meters habang ang normal operating level nito ay hanggang 180 meters.

Maaalala na nitong mga nakalipas na araw ay nagpasya ang ilang water concessionaire na magkaroon ng rotational water interruption schedule sa harap ng nababawasang tubig sa Angat Dam, na pinagkukuhanan ng 90 porsiyentong suplay ng tubig ng mga kabahayan at establisimiyento sa Metro Manila.

Bukod sa Metro Manila, may nakalaan ding suplay ng tubig ang Angat Dam sa mga farming irrigation site sa Bulacan at Pampanga.

Dahil dito, may ginagawa na rin umangang hakbang ang NWRB para matulungan ang mga magsasakang mangangailangan ng tubig, sa harap ng nababawasang water level sa dam.



"Sa tingin natin na masu-sustain natin ang kasalukuyang mga nakatanim sa Bulacan at Pampanga at tinutulungan namin sila at ang MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System) na magamit nang husto na nire-release sa Angat Dam at may binigay na kagamitan ang MWSS para makatulong sa sitwasyon ng Bulacan ng Pampanga," ani David.

Nagsasagawa na rin aniya ng cloud seeding operations ang mga awtoridad sa Angat Dam para makaagapay sa bumababang water level ng dam.



HILDA FOR March 24, 2022 MAGING RESPONSIBLE AT BIGYANG HALAGA ANG TUBIG



March 24, 2022 @ 11:17 AM 20 hours ago

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 pangagailangan sa malinis na tubig inumin.

Hindi dahil archipelagic country ang Pilipinas ay ligtas na tayo sa matinding pagka-uhaw. Dulot na rin ng polusyon at kapabayaan, manipis na ang reserbang tubig malinis sa ilalim ng ating kalupaan.

Noong nakaraang Linggo ay pormal ng 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 mtrs at sa La Mesa Dam nasa 78.53.

Nakikiisa din 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 Hydrometeorological and climate information for disaster risk reduction.

Kinikilala na ng halos 99% na mga mamamayan ng mundo ang katotohanan ng climate change and global warming. Sa maraming pagkakataon ay nakita na natin ang bangis ng mapaminsalang mga bagyo, tsunami, mas matinding tag-lamig at tag-init. Maraming tao ang napipinsala gayundin ang balance ng daigdig.

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

Source: <https://www.remate.ph/hilda-for-march-24-2022-maging-responsible-at-bigyang-halaga-ang-tubig/>



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Quarries will again trigger ruinous floods starting May

[GOTCHA](#) - [Jarius Bondoc](#) - The Philippine Star March 25, 2022 | 12:00am

Two months from now dry faucets will turn into floods. Rains will rush down bald mountains, deluging homes and shops below. Greater Manila will again be worst hit. Residents will blame only what they see: plastic trash clogging drains. The true culprits will again escape accountability. Those are the handful of quarriers in the Marikina watershed east of the megalopolis.

Three of the quarries are in Sitio San Roque, Baras, Rizal uphill from Antipolo capital. Sixteen others are in adjacent Montalban. That the largest is owned by an ex-environment secretary shows the futility of forest preservation and flood prevention.

The three quarriers in Baras ironically control the upper slopes. Just below them is the Masungi Georeserve Project. The 2,700-hectare Masungi is world-acclaimed for reforestation and rewilding. Winding across it into the quarries is a 16-kilometer-long spine of epochs-old limestone. The quarriers are after that water-bearing, flood-preventing limestone.

Two administrations expanded Masungi from its original 130 to 430 hectares. The Masungi Georeserve Foundation opened it to eco-tourists to cover the cost of park rangers against illegal loggers and trespassers. In 2017 environment secretary Gina Lopez assigned 2,270 hectares more to the Foundation. But forest protection seems to be a losing battle. A syndicate in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is protecting instead the quarriers.

Crooked bureaucrats awarded the quarriers in 1998-1999 Mineral Production Sharing Agreements. "Those MPSAs are patently illegal," says Foundation president Ben Dumaliang. The Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape is a watershed. As such it is listed in the National Integrated Protected Areas System Law. Presidential Proclamation 1636 of 1977 and DENR Department Administrative Order 33 of 1993 prohibit quarrying in watersheds and protected areas. Mere MPSAs may not supersede laws and regulations.

Encouraged by the quarriers, two commercial swimming pool resorts have been built in the area recently. One of them fenced off half a kilometer of river and diverted the water to the pools. Both have no business permits. Three police generals erected mansions; two vacated the illegal constructions after retirement. Illegal woodcutters and slash-and-burn (kaingin) trespassers destroyed 16 hectares of forest, the Department of the Interior and Local Government denounced in July 2021.

Alleged goons of the resort owners and the remaining general harass the hundred or so Masungi park rangers. The unarmed rangers have been fired at with rifles and shotguns to scare them from fencing off the intruders. Attacks have been reported to the local police. Still the goons persist. Last Feb. 18, The STAR reported, 30 thugs clubbed and stoned seven rangers then lurching at a carinderia. Two had to be hospitalized. One of the maulers has a pending court case for previously shooting the ranger barracks.

The DILG has urged DENR to file criminal charges against the resort owners, loggers and their bureaucrat abettors. Inspecting Masungi's outlying areas last July, DILG U-Sec. Jonathan Malaya saw illegal structures in the 16 newly denuded hectares. "Binusabos na nga nila ang kalikasan, naghahari-harian pa sila sa lugar, at hindi sumusunod sa mga otoridad at batas pang-kalikasan," he fumed. As part of President Rodrigo Duterte's Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force, Malaya cited bases for indicting the trespassers: NIPAS Law, Revised Forestry Code, Water Code and DENR DAO 1993-33 declaring Masungi as "Strict Nature Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary".



In March 2020 DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu vowed to cancel the MPSAs for being harmful to the area. Two years hence it has not materialized. Shady underlings apparently withheld the cancellation order from Cimatu's signature, until he retired last month.

The syndicate is even turning the tables on Masungi Georeserve Foundation. "They are accusing us of land grabbing inspite of our official designation by DENR as conservationists," Dumaliang laments. Billboards badmouthing the eco-park have been put up at resort entrances and unlicensed roadside eateries.

A days-long water shut-off early this month was blamed by illegal residents on the Foundation. It turned out from drone videos, however, that the resorts had diverted the springs to fill up their pools and water tanks in anticipation of summer tourist influx.

The demonization seems orchestrated. Purportedly in response to the locals' outcry, provincial and central DENR officials are recommending closure of the Masungi Georeserve Project. Ignored are seven years of Dumaliang's reforestation and rewilding, mostly funded out of his own pocket. His eldest daughters, National Geographic explorer Ann and Billie, had to resign from corporate jobs to help his efforts full time. Ignored, too, are 67,000 replanted native trees, and citations from the UN Development Program, International Union for Conservation of Nature, World Travel-Tourism Council and UN World Tourism Organization.

Only Duterte can save Masungi perhaps. "The area is a geohazard zone prone to floods and landslides," Dumaliang wrote the President on Mar. 14. "Water supply for the surrounding communities will be lost from the resulting excavation and extraction of the water-bearing limestone formation. The 60-million-year old geological heritage and shelter of indigenous plants and animals will be destroyed."

It's the quarries that must go. Or else the people of Metro Manila, Bulacan and Rizal will continue to suffer destructive floods like those from superstorm Ondoy in 2009 and typhoon Ulysses in 2020.

* * *

Catch Sapol radio show, Saturdays, 8 to 10 a.m., DWIZ (882-AM).



Earth Hour 2022 encourages Filipinos to vote for the environment's future

Published March 24, 2022 10:45pm



The World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines' (WWF-PH) Shape Our Future: The Countdown to Earth Hour 2022 Virtual Roundtable discussion happening on March 26, 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. will talk about the environmental issues that the next set of leaders of the country should focus on.

This coming Earth Hour 2022 celebration highlights the need to be decisive for the coming national elections.

Filipinos must choose leaders who will actively respond to the dual challenge of climate change and biodiversity loss in the next six years.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines' (WWF-PH) Shape Our Future: The Countdown to Earth Hour 2022 Virtual Roundtable discussion happening on March 26, 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. will talk about the environmental issues that the next set of leaders of the country should focus on.

The yearly global switching off of lights will be observed from 8:30pm to 9:30pm in the Philippines.

Over 150 countries around the world will also follow suit as part of this one-of-a-kind global grassroots movement for nature. Millions of people participate every year in Earth Hour regardless of nationality or religion making a true movement of humanity for the environment.

Discussions about the loss of nature and climate change as defining issues for the country will be led by Earth Hour Philippines National Director Atty. Angela Consuelo Ibay, with panelists WWF-PH Child Ambassador Xia Vigor, WWF-PH National Youth Council member and ASEAN Youth Advocates Founder Mirus Ponon, The Green Thumb Coalition Convenor Jaybee Garganera, Ten



Knots Director of Sustainability Mariglo Laririt, and Rodel Cabigal, President of United Ilijan Agricultural Workers for Sustainable Development.

With the theme “Shape our future,” the environmental movement aims to be a platform to encourage and mobilize collective action for the environment by educating and inspiring everyone, especially government leaders, to act for nature and climate.

Earth Hour 2022 movement takes the opportunity to educate and empower Filipino voters to #ChangeTheEnding for the Philippines by highlighting the issues in biodiversity conservation and climate change, and raise these issues with people seeking office in the coming elections.

Along with the aim to encourage people to switch off in solidarity with the planet, the Earth Hour 2022 also serves as a call to action to make every individual realize their role in shaping a new future for the people and the planet by taking small steps towards building a sustainable lifestyle as

well as urging the government and large-scale companies to help build a fairer, nature-positive and net-zero carbon future.

For media arrangements, please contact:

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Source: https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/826226/earth-hour-2022-encourages-filipinos-to-vote-for-the-environment-s-future/story/?just_in&fbclid=IwAR1DULc1vSDvyRbfw6R2c_ixpUb4Cmja3v9fHDp6uwZDTFe5LRrWqFGX2V4



'PHL debt needs a decade to cut; time to shift to green growth'

BYCAI ORDINARIO MARCH 23, 2022

PARING down the country's pandemic debts could take a decade or more, according to a retired professor from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).

In a Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) forum on Wednesday, Community Legal Help and Policy Center Science Director Teodoro C. Mendoza said this takes into consideration growth rates of 5 percent to as high as 9 percent.

If GDP growth is at 5 percent, the Philippines can wipe out its pandemic debts in 14 years. But if the economy grows at 9 percent, this will allow the country to pay it off in 10 years.

"We have a comatose economy because we have a huge debt of P13 trillion which is equivalent to 68 percent of our GDP. We have a budget deficit of P1.7 trillion," Mendoza said in the vernacular on Wednesday.

Factors that would make this difficult include the devaluation of the peso. Mendoza said before the Duterte administration assumed office, the peso was at P48 to the US dollar.

However, more recently, the peso has been devalued further at P51 to the greenback. This is worrisome, Mendoza said, because for every peso devaluation suffered by the exchange rate, the country's debt service increases by P24 billion.

In this case when the peso has seen a devaluation of P3, following Mendoza's estimates, this means the country needs to shell out an additional P72 billion to pay its debts.

"Those are the initial calculations I came up with. This wasn't discussed in any forum involving our presidentiables our candidates for vice president, including senators. How can they grow the economy, with this huge debt overhang and we have automatic debt payment?" Mendoza said, partly in Filipino.

Green growth

IN order to improve the country's chances of attaining higher growth, FDC President Rene E. Ofreneo cited a need to focus not just on the primary strength of the economy but also on attaining green growth.

Attaining green growth, Ofreneo said, means boosting green consumption that would also improve the country's response to climate change. This means focusing on the country's strength, particularly agriculture.

"Let us look inward, let us build our internal strength. Consumption-led [growth] should be qualified, green consumption-led. This means that is the focus. Right now the economy is consumption-led [with] remittances of the OFWs, but how long can we maintain this? So green consumption, going organic, going chemical free with reforestation, climate proofing, Covid-proofing our communities—that should all be there," Ofreneo said, partly in Filipino.

Ingredients for growth

Mendoza said no matter what anybody says about the structure of the Philippine economy today, the Philippines has all the ingredients to grow its own food and be sufficient. He said the Philippines has land to plant in, enjoy 12 months of sunlight, sufficient water resources, plenty of labor, and capital—all keys for a vibrant agriculture sector.

Mendoza said with this strategy, the country would be better off than today. He said food costs are very high not only because of the recent spike in oil and wheat prices due to the Russia-



Ukraine war.

Taking into consideration climate change and the ecological costs of growing food, Mendoza estimated that rice prices could actually reach P305 to P316 per kilogram while chicken and meat prices could reach P300 per kilogram and P500 per kilogram, respectively.

These costs increase because of the number of people in the world as well as pets. Mendoza said there are 900 million dogs and about 400 million cats being fed by people worldwide, further increasing demand for food.

Mendoza said it is time to consider a shift in people's diets. He said it is time for people, including Filipinos, to grow their own food in order to reduce the demand for food items. "A plant-based diet is resource-less intensive. A meat-based diet requires 1.4 hectares. If we all become meat lovers, we need 7 earths [to sustain us]," Mendoza said in a presentation.

He said Filipinos should shift to planetary-health diets, which are good for humans and mother earth. This means consuming more vegetables, fruits, and reducing rice consumption.

It is important, he said, to shift to eating more root crops, maiz, adlai, and sorghum as well as to be more conscious of drinking 8 glasses of water daily. Meat consumption should be reduced to only once a week.



Sanitary landfill blessing



SANITARY LANDFILL. Silay City Mayor Mark Andrew Arthur Golez leads the blessing and inauguration of the city's sanitary landfill at Hacienda Nalinao in Barangay Kapitan Ramon Thursday, March 24, 2022. (Silay City Government)

March 24, 2022

SILAY City Mayor Mark Andrew Arthur Golez leads the blessing and inauguration of the city's sanitary landfill at Hacienda Nalinao in Barangay Kapitan Ramon Thursday, March 24, 2022.

The landfill was donated by his parents, former Assemblyman Jaime "Jimmy" and Ma. Teresa Golez.

He was also joined by his wife, Anne Golez, and other local officials. **(Silay City Government)**



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.

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.



Microplastics found in human blood for first time

Exclusive: The discovery shows the particles can travel around the body and may lodge in organs



Microplastics cause damage to human cells in the laboratory. Photograph: David Kelly/Photograph David Kelly

Damian Carrington *Environment editor*

[@dpcarrington](#)

Thu 24 Mar 2022 11.00 GMT

Microplastic pollution has been detected in human blood for the first time, with scientists finding the tiny particles in almost 80% of the people tested.

The discovery shows the particles can travel around the body and may lodge in organs. The impact on health is as yet unknown. But researchers are concerned as [microplastics cause damage to human cells](#) in the laboratory and [air pollution particles](#) are already known to enter the body and cause millions of early deaths a year.

Huge amounts of plastic waste are dumped in the environment and microplastics now contaminate the entire planet, from the [summit of Mount Everest](#) to the [deepest oceans](#). People were already known to consume the tiny particles [via food](#) and [water](#) as well as [breathing them in](#), and they have been found in the [faeces of babies and adults](#).

The scientists analysed blood samples from 22 anonymous donors, all healthy adults and found plastic particles in 17. Half the samples contained PET plastic, which is commonly used in drinks bottles, while a third contained polystyrene, used for packaging food and other products. A quarter of the blood samples contained polyethylene, from which plastic carrier bags are made.

“Our study is the first indication that we have polymer particles in our blood – it’s a breakthrough result,” said Prof Dick Vethaak, an ecotoxicologist at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands. “But we have to extend the research and increase the sample sizes, the number of polymers assessed, etc.” Further studies by a number of groups are already under way, he said.

“It is certainly reasonable to be concerned,” Vethaak told the Guardian. “The particles are there and are transported throughout the body.” He said previous work had shown that microplastics were 10 times higher in the faeces of babies compared with adults and that babies fed with plastic bottles are [swallowing millions of microplastic particles](#) a day.

“We also know in general that babies and young children are more vulnerable to chemical and particle exposure,” he said. “That worries me a lot.”



The new research is published in the [journal Environment International](#) and adapted existing techniques to detect and analyse particles as small as 0.0007mm. Some of the blood samples contained two or three types of plastic. The team used steel syringe needles and glass tubes to avoid contamination, and tested for background levels of microplastics using blank samples.

Vethaak acknowledged that the amount and type of plastic varied considerably between the blood samples. “But this is a pioneering study,” he said, with more work now needed. He said the differences might reflect short-term exposure before the blood samples were taken, such as drinking from a plastic-lined coffee cup, or wearing a plastic face mask.

“The big question is what is happening in our body?” Vethaak said. “Are the particles retained in the body? Are they transported to certain organs, such as getting past the blood-brain barrier?” And are these levels sufficiently high to trigger disease? We urgently need to fund further research so we can find out.”

The new research was funded by the Dutch National Organisation for [Health](#) Research and Development and Common Seas, a social enterprise working to reduce plastic pollution.

“Plastic production is set to double by 2040,” said Jo Royle, founder of the charity Common Seas. “We have a right to know what all this plastic is doing to our bodies.” Common Seas, along with more than 80 NGOs, scientists and MPs, are asking the [UK government to allocate £15m to research](#) on the human health impacts of plastic. The EU is already funding research on the [impact of microplastic on fetuses and babies](#), and on the immune system.

A recent study found that microplastics can [latch on to the outer membranes of red blood cells](#) and may limit their ability to transport oxygen. The particles have also been found in the [placentas of pregnant women](#), and in pregnant rats they pass rapidly through the lungs [into the hearts, brains and other organs](#) of the fetuses.

A new [review paper published on Tuesday](#), co-authored by Vethaak, assessed cancer risk and concluded: “More detailed research on how micro- and nano-plastics affect the structures and processes of the human body, and whether and how they can transform cells and induce carcinogenesis, is urgently needed, particularly in light of the exponential increase in plastic production. The problem is becoming more urgent with each day.”

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Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/24/microplastics-found-in-human-blood-for-first-time>

A billion climate-vulnerable people live in informal settlements – here's what they face

More diseases, less access to social protection, and a worsening outlook for every decimal point of temperature increase. Effective solutions need to include all stakeholders.



Floods in East Africa in 2020 displaced thousands, killed hundreds, and damaged farms. With the Covid-19 crisis and locust invasion, flooding is expected to exacerbate the food security situation in the country. Image: [Greenpeace](#).

By Vanesa Castán Broto, Emmanuel Osuteye and Linda Westman
March 24, 2022

Flooding is common in informal settlements in [Bwaise](#), a neighbourhood in the Ugandan capital Kampala. Bwaise's residents are largely excluded from planning and local decision-making processes, and have poor housing and limited access to sanitation and other essential services.

Flooding makes matters much worse. During a visit in November 2019, residents showed us that they dig trenches around their houses and build small retaining walls to prevent water from flooding in. Public toilets are raised about a metre above the ground.

Bwaise lies in a swampy valley between several of Kampala's many hills and was already prone to flooding. But floods are now happening more and more often [because of climate change](#).

This neighbourhood is not exceptional, and such conditions are common in cities around the world. The UN estimates that around one in four city dwellers – [more than 1 billion people](#) – live in precarious conditions, without access to basic services or adequate housing and are excluded from health, education, and livelihood opportunities.

If this sounds bad, things are about to get worse: the IPCC's latest report on climate change [impacts, adaptation and vulnerability](#) (we helped write the [chapter on cities](#)) made it explicit that people living in [informal settlements](#) in areas such as Bwaise are the most vulnerable urban populations to climate change.

Where climate change hits hardest

These settlements tend to be found in marginal lands, often prone to flooding. Lack of drainage means the floods last longer and stagnant water becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes that spread diseases such as malaria and dengue fever.

Informal settlement dwellers also lack access to many of the resources that provide protection against climate hazards. Precarious and poor-quality housing, for instance, offers no protection against flooding or extreme temperatures, and so the effect on people's health and wellbeing is greater than if they were living in households with air conditioning or at least adequate insulation and ventilation.



Sanitation and waste management systems protect against disease transmission and other problems caused by flooding, yet are typically not adequate in informal settlements.

Residents of informal settlements often lack access to social security and healthcare systems that provide protection for other city dwellers during climate disasters. With livelihoods compromised and a lack of social protection or insurance, the impacts of a flood may keep families in poverty for generations.

Climate change does not happen in a vacuum, and the rapid growth of urban populations can further exacerbate environmental challenges. For example, cities already experience much warmer temperatures than surrounding areas, in what is called the [urban heat island effect](#).

This combines with and magnifies climate change-induced heatwaves. These effects are already noticeable with warming of 1.1 degrees Celsius, but scientists argue that they will be unbearable if temperatures [rise beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius](#).

Don't only focus on infrastructure

The recent [IPCC report](#) finds evidence that climate change adaptation is being integrated into urban policy, but progress is slow. Investments are concentrated in large infrastructure projects, such as widening drainage channels and roads.

However, there is a need to tackle the root causes of vulnerability with a portfolio of responses such as new wetlands or parks that absorb storm water, and social protections such as welfare payments or insurance for those that are flooded or otherwise impacted by climate change.

The IPCC report explains that effective adaptation depends on local governments, businesses, NGOs, and communities working together. It cites examples from Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique and Sierra Leone which show that informal settlements generate crucial data on climate and health risks that support adaptation and development plans. Local residents also develop innovations to create more sustainable futures, such as buildings that take into account flooding and heat risks.

Communities such as those in Bwaise have worked hard to provide options for their members even in the face of [desperate conditions](#). For example, people there have worked with NGOs to build themselves a [new sanitation unit](#) designed to endure more frequent floods.

Improving sanitation conditions was a small step towards a more resilient neighbourhood, but an important one for the people who benefited from it. However, the scale of the climate change challenge is such that communities can no longer deliver adaptation alone. Maintaining liveability in future cities will depend on institutions that are able to recognise the needs and capacities of informal settlement dwellers.

[Vanessa Castán Broto](#) is a professor of climate urbanism at the University of Sheffield. [Emmanuel Osuteye](#) is a lecturer in urbanisation and sustainable development at University College London. [Linda Westman](#) is a postdoctoral research associate at the Urban Institute, in the University of Sheffield.

This article was originally published on [The Conversation](#).



EU supports women engagement in natural resources governance

BY BUSINESSMIRROR MARCH 23, 2022

AMBASSADOR Luc Véron met mayors, women leaders and civil-society organizations (CSOs) in Real, Infanta, and General Nakar in Quezon province to discuss the “Women Go” and “Forest Governance” projects implemented by Haribon Foundation and funded by the European Union (EU).

Véron engaged with women-leaders of Kalipunan ng Liping Pilipina (KALIPI) Federations and Organizations, as well as Kilos Unlad ng Mamamayan ng Real, then visited the projects’ activities like training sessions and livelihood activities.

“Women are key actors in the inclusive and sustainable management of natural resources in the Philippines,” he said. “The EU is determined to act on the gender dimension of environmental degradation and climate change, and wants to contribute to promoting girls’ and women’s participation and leadership [by supporting CSOs’] initiatives like the project implemented by Haribon.”

The envoy added, “Forests play a very significant role in the context of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide, helping prevent floods, retaining water for domestic use and agriculture, [as well as] providing various sources of livelihood. It is why the EU supports forest-governance actions.”

Women Go (“Enhancing the Role of Women in Protected Area Governance for Social Change”) aims to increase the level of influence and leadership of rural women in the governance of protected areas and in sustainable programs on climate-change adaptation, disaster-risk reduction and livelihood.

Meanwhile, the regional Forest Governance (“Strengthening Nonstate Actor Involvement in Forest Governance in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Papua New Guinea”) project seeks to increase participation of forest-dependent communities in forest governance and policy processes, to effectively contribute to forest management, and land-use planning across three key biodiversity area sites, including Mount Irid-Angilo in Sierra Madre.

Activities visited by the ambassador were: a training on environmental leadership and organizational development for women-leaders, a gender-sensitivity and natural resource-management training workshop for women-leaders and their husbands, a lemongrass-planting site as the livelihood project of KALIPI-Cawayan in Real, and a native and fruit-bearing tree nursery site of the forest guard group SANAMAGMA in Infanta as part of its forest-monitoring activities, and as alternative sources of income to their members and community.

Véron also had the opportunity to plant kamagong and narra seedlings at the nursery site. Both are endemic hardwood trees, which are both vulnerable in the country. The planting of their seedlings symbolizes the efforts made to conserve the environment, as well as the forests that protect community members from floods, provide sources of livelihood, and help in the fight against climate change.



Endangered specie na Philippine spotted deer, ipinanganak sa chester zoo sa England!

[MGA PANGYAYARING KAGILA-GILALAS](#) - [Arnel Medina](#) - Pang-masa March 25, 2022 | 12:00am

INANUNSYO kamakailan ng Chester Zoo sa England na may ipinanganak sa kanilang pasilidad na Philippine spotted deer at pinangalanan nilang Lyra.

Ang Philippine spotted deer o Visayan deer ay isang endangered specie ng usa na matatagpuan lamang sa rainforests ng Panay at Negros. Dati ay mayroong Philippine spotted deer sa Cebu, Guimaras, Leyte, Masbate, at Samar ngunit naubos na sila dahil sa pangangaso, deforestation at forest clearance.

Ayon sa Chester Zoo, delikadong ma-extinct o tuluyang mawala ang specie na ito dahil 700 na lamang ang bilang nila sa kagubatan. Ang pagsilang ni Lyra, ay bahagi ng conservation breeding program sa pagitan ng Chester Zoo at ng Philippine government.

Sa panayam sa zookeeper ng Chester Zoo na si Emma Evison, ipinagdiwang nila ang pagsilang kay Lyra dahil ang bawat kapanganakan ng mga Philippine spotted deer ay malaki ang magagawa upang mapigilan ang specie na ito na maging extinct.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pang-masa/punto-mo/2022/03/25/2169789/endangered-specie-na-philippine-spotted-deer-ipinanganak-sa-chester-zoo-sa-england>

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DENR chief commends San Miguel

DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampilna has commended San Miguel Corp. (SMC) for the company's pro-environment programs and projects.

Specifically, the DENR chief lauded SMC's feat in dredging the 36.4-kilometer Tullahan-Tinajeros River System, one of the 17 principal river systems draining into Manila Bay.

"Despite the setback brought about by the pandemic, SMC has proven its dedication in protecting and preserving our environment. We are very grateful for our partnership in securing healthier and cleaner waterways for a better future," he said in a statement.

The partnership between DENR and SMC is part of the Adopt-an-Estero Program — one of the department's priority initiatives and key strategies to comply with the continuing Supreme Court mandamus to clean up Manila Bay.

To recall, then DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu and SMC President and CEO Ramon S. Ang signed a memorandum of agreement on March 14, 2019 for the rehabilitation of the Tullahan-Tinajeros River System.

SMC pledged P1 billion for the dredging and clean-up activities starting from La Mesa Dam in Quezon City

and into Manila Bay at Centennial Park in Navotas City.

As of March 10, SMC reported it has finished dredging the portion of the river at Niugan, Malabon City using backhoes and recovered 93,393 cubic meters of dredged materials.

Meanwhile, it continued to conduct dredging operations in some portions of Catmon and Maysilo in Malabon City.

Since starting the project on October 12, 2021, SMC has dredged 155,113 cubic meters in the area and targets to finish the activity by the third week of March 2022.

It had also extended and prioritized the dredging of Sectors 3 and 4 — from Lambingan Bridge to Tinajeros Bridge Catmon/Maysilo in Malabon and from Tinajeros Bridge to Tullahan Bridge Tinajeros, Potrero and Marulas, respectively — to address flooding in these areas during the rainy season.

It has currently dredged 789,951 cubic meters and covered 7.71 kilometers of the river from Sector 1 (Manila Bay to Tonsuya Bridge Bangulasi, Tañong, Longos) to Sector 5 (Tullahan Bridge to NLEX Potrero, Marulas, Gen. T. de Leon).

Sampilna underscored the importance of dredging these areas to improve the quality of water draining into Manila Bay. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



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DENR: Planet, people first

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

MAKE environmental stewardship as part of our "new normal" lifestyle aside from the symbolic switching of lights for an hour.

This is the appeal of Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampilna to the public as the world observes the annual Earth Hour event tomorrow, Saturday.

"Apart from safeguarding ourselves from the COVID-19 virus under the new normal, let us also create a norm that puts our planet and, ultimately, our people first. Sustainability should already be a lifestyle and a com-

mon goal for each Filipino," Sampilna said.

On April 2021, the Philippines 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.

Sampilna stressed that this "ambitious goal" cannot be achieved with the government doing the work alone and if people continue their unsustainable practices that significantly harm

nature.

Sampilna committed to pursue the enforcement of the country's environmental laws like the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, and Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, to combat some of the country's pressing environmental challenges.

Under his leadership, the DENR will also continue to strengthen its National Greening Program while protecting 8.7 million hectares of forests and conserving the country's protected areas and biodiversity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

"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," Sampilna said.

He also cited the importance of collective individual actions to combat climate change by encouraging Filipinos to use bicycles and mass transport vehicles, and to carpool to go to places amid the current local fuel price hike in the country.

Sampilna also reminded the public to conserve water, especially during the dry season.



Gov't urged to reconsider Pasig expressway due to environmental concerns

A TRANSPORT advocacy has urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to reassess the proposed Pasig River Expressway (PAREX), citing its environmental impact.

The Move As One Coalition said that the expressway will deliver "little or no benefit while causing significant harm," calling it the "wrong project for today and tomorrow."

PAREX is San Miguel Corp.'s (SMC) planned P95-billion, six-lane elevated highway, which will traverse Manila, Mandaluyong, Taguig, Makati, and Pasig along the river's course.

Move As One urged the government to postpone the public hearing on PAREX scheduled for March 25.

"The PAREX scoping meeting on July 14 (2021) was not carried out correctly and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project contains two different expressway alignments, a serious error that will mislead and confuse stakeholders," the coalition said in a statement.

On March 23, the coalition issued an 18-page statement and its own environmental impact assessment to the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR.

"If the EIA is undertaken correctly and comprehensively, the EIA will show that the damage from PAREX significantly outweighs its questionable and likely small benefits. A project with negative impacts that exceed expected benefits should not be allowed to proceed, especially if the negative impacts are significant and not amenable to mitigation," Move As One said.

"Unlike other major infrastructure projects, PAREX has never undergone the normal scrutiny and careful review by the government's multi-agency Investment Coordination Committee. PAREX was never given any scrutiny by

the Toll Regulatory Board, except for a cursory technical and financial evaluation with very little detail," it added.

Move As One said that SMC was not required to submit a comprehensive project economic analysis incorporating all costs and benefits including losses from likely negative social, economic, and environmental impacts.

"For this reason, the EIA of PAREX needs to be a comprehensive and credible accounting of all impacts that the project will bring. It may be the only opportunity the Filipino people will have to put a stop to a harmful project. It is therefore important that the proponent should not be permitted to take any 'shortcuts' or to submit an incomplete or half-baked EIA," it said.

"The draft EIA Report has missed out on several significant impacts of PAREX. Because of the considerable harm that PAREX could bring to millions of Filipinos, to priceless heritage assets and to the environment, these likely impacts deserve to be analyzed thoroughly by the proponent," it added.

The coalition estimated that the economic cost of the urban blight to nearby communities at a minimum of P96.9 billion.

It also cited the health and economic impacts of PAREX, including the increase in ambient air temperature, and air and noise pollution.

"Neighborhoods in the vicinity of PAREX will become warmer. Increased temperature is expected from motor vehicles, from the reduction of the natural cooling effect of the Pasig River, and from the 'urban heat island effect.' Increased temperatures will result in illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke and more deaths from heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular diseases," Move As One said. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**



World Water Day 2022: 5K mangroves itinanim ng Maynilad

Umaabot sa 5,000 mangrove propagules ang naitanim ng West Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) sa Manila Bay coastal area sa lalawigan ng Cavite bilang bahagi ng pakikiisa sa pagdiriwang ng World Water Day 2022.

Ang pagtanim ng mangroves ay pinangunahan ng Cavite Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) sa ginanap na planting activity ng Maynilad sa Barangay Sineguelasan, Bacoor City.

Sa ilalim ng "Plant for Life" reforestation at affores-

tation program, ang Maynilad ay nagtanim ng mangroves kada taon sa mga baybayin para matulungan ang mga komunidad. Ang mangroves ay proteksyon sa storm surges, nagsisilbing bahay ng mga isda at nakakatulong sa epekto ng climate change. (*Angie dela Cruz*)



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JARIUS BONDOC



Quarries will again trigger ruinous floods starting May

Two months from now dry faucets will turn into floods. Rains will rush down bald mountains, deluging homes and shops below. Greater Manila will again be worst hit. Residents will blame only what they see: plastic trash clogging drains. The true culprits will again escape accountability. Those are the handful of quarriers in the Marikina watershed east of the megalopolis.

Three of the quarries are in Sitio San Roque, Baras, Rizal uphill from Antipolo capital. Sixteen others are in adjacent Montalban. That the largest is owned by an ex-environment secretary shows the futility of forest preservation and flood prevention.

The three quarriers in Baras ironically control the upper slopes. Just below them is the Masungi Georeserve Project. The 2,700-hectare Masungi is world-acclaimed for reforestation and rewilding. Winding across it into the quarries is a 16-kilometer-long spine of epochs-old limestone. The quarriers are after that water-bearing, flood-preventing limestone.

Two administrations expanded Masungi from its original 130 to 430 hectares. The Masungi Georeserve Foundation opened it to eco-tourists to cover the cost of park rangers against illegal loggers and trespassers. In 2017 environment secretary Gina Lopez assigned 2,270 hectares more to the Foundation. But forest protection seems to be a losing battle. A syndicate in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is protecting instead the quarriers.

Crooked bureaucrats awarded the quarriers in 1998-1999 Mineral Production Sharing Agreements. "Those MPSAs are patently illegal," says Foundation president Ben Dumaliang. The Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape is a watershed. As such it is listed in the National Integrated Protected Areas System Law. Presidential Proclamation 1636 of 1977 and DENR Department Administrative Order 83 of 1993 prohibit quarrying in watersheds and protected areas. Mere MPSAs may not supersede laws and regulations.

Encouraged by the quarriers, two commercial swimming pool resorts have been built in the area recently. One of them fenced off half a kilometer of river and diverted the water to the pools. Both have no business permits. Three police generals erected mansions; two vacated the illegal constructions after retirement. Illegal woodcutters and slash-and-burn (*kaingin*) trespassers destroyed 16 hectares of forest, the Department of the Interior and Local Government denounced in July 2021.

Alleged goons of the resort owners and the remaining general harass the hundred or so Masungi park rangers. The unarmed rangers have been fired at with rifles and shotguns to scare them from fencing off the intruders. Attacks have been reported to the local police. Still the goons persist. Last Feb. 18, **The STAR** reported, 30 thugs clubbed and stoned seven rangers then lurching at a carinderia. Two had to be hospitalized. One of the maulers has a pending court case for previously shooting the ranger

barracks.

The DILG has urged DENR to file criminal charges against the resort owners, loggers and their bureaucrat abettors. Inspecting Masungi's outlying areas last July, DILG U-Sec. Jonathan Malaya saw illegal structures in the 16 newly denuded hectares. "Binusabos na nga nila ang kalikasan, naghahariharian pa sila sa lugar, at hindi sumusunod sa mga otoridad at batas pang-kalikasan," he fumed. As part of President Rodrigo Duterte's Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force, Malaya cited bases for indicting the trespassers: NIPAS Law, Revised Forestry Code, Water Code and DENR DAO 1993-33 declaring Masungi as "Strict Nature Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary".

In March 2020 DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu vowed to cancel the MPSAs for being harmful to the area. Two years hence it has not materialized. Shady underlings apparently withheld the cancellation order from Cimatu's signature, until he retired last month.

The syndicate is even turning the tables on Masungi Georeserve Foundation. "They are accusing us of land grabbing inspite of our official designation by DENR as conservationists," Dumaliang laments. Billboards bad-mouthing the eco-park have been put up at resort entrances and unlicensed roadside eateries.



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A days-long water shut-off early this month was blamed by illegal residents on the Foundation. It turned out from drone videos, however, that the resorts had diverted the springs to fill up their pools and water tanks in anticipation of summer tourist influx.

The demonization seems orchestrated. Purportedly in response to the locals' outcry, provincial and central DENR officials are recommending closure of the Masungi Georeserve Project. Ignored are seven years of Dumaliang's reforestation and rewilding, mostly funded out of his own pocket. His eldest daughters, National Geographic explorer Ann and Billie, had to resign from corporate jobs to help his efforts full time. Ignored, too, are 67,000 replanted native trees, and citations from the UN Development Program, International Union for Conservation of Nature, World Travel-Tourism Council and UN World Tourism Organization.

Only Duterte can save Masungi perhaps. "The area is a geohazard zone prone to floods and landslides," Dumaliang wrote the President on Mar. 14. "Water supply for the surrounding communities will be lost from the resulting excavation and extraction of the water-bearing limestone formation. The 60-million-year old geological heritage and shelter of indigenous plants and animals will be destroyed."

It's the quarries that must go. Or else the people of Metro Manila, Bulacan and Rizal will continue to suffer destructive floods like those from superstorm Ondoy in 2009 and typhoon Ulysses in 2020.

* * *

Catch Sapol radio show, Saturdays, 8 to 10 a.m., DWIZ (882-AM).

★



1st ever Earth Hour virtual run launched

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

A group of environmentalists has launched the first ever "Earth Hour Virtual Run" to encourage the Filipino running community to promote environmental conservation.

The event is led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Philippines in coordination with Pinoy Fitness, a web-based running and fitness community of athletes and fitness enthusiasts in the country.

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Dubbed "Earth Hour Virtual Run: Shape Our Future," the event is in line with the celebration of Earth Hour 2022 tomorrow.

Pinoy Fitness CEO Jeff Lo said the running community could utilize their platform to support environmental protection and conservation.

"For us in the running and fitness community, we believe that advocating for personal health should go hand-in-hand with advocating for the health of the environment," Lo said.

"Some of the ways that members of the fitness community have been taking to promote environmental conservation are through calling people's attention to the importance of not just their personal well-being but of the environment," he added. "Pledging and participating in cause-centric events like distance and virtual runs aimed at raising funds for action groups on sustainability are also among the things that the running community takes."

The virtual race, which will support the organization's environmental conservation efforts across the country, will begin tomorrow until April 22.

Runners who will complete the 10 kilometer, 20 km, 40 km, or 60 km cumulative distance over the course of the run will receive a special Earth Hour finishers' kit and have the chance to bag goodies from Adidas, Rustan's, Rudy Project, Natura Yoga; virtual workout session from fitness trainer Carla Piscosso, Urbanashramyoga, Pinoy Fitness and WWF-Philippines.

Various social media influencers including WWF-Philippines ambassadors Rovilson Fernandez and Karen Ibasco, and celebrities Troy Montero and Carla Piscosso have confirmed to join the run.

Registration is until April 9 through the Pinoy Fitness Atleta app.

For more information, e-mail WWF-Philippines at donations@wwf.org.ph.

Starting out as a symbolic "lights out event" in Sydney in 2007, WWF said Earth Hour has grown as the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment spanning over 192 countries and territories across the globe.

It brought out more than 9.6 billion impressions, with related hashtags trending in 42 countries last year.

Theme #ShapeOurFuture this 2022, the WWF network aims to remind the public that everyone has a role in shaping a new future for people and the planet - from taking individual steps toward living sustainably to urging companies and governments to help build a nature-positive and carbon-neutral future.



It's time to vote for the environment's future

The Earth Hour 2022 celebration highlights the need to be decisive for the coming national elections. Filipinos must choose leaders who will actively respond to the dual challenge of climate change and biodiversity loss in the next six years.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines' (WWF-PH) "Shape Our Future: The Countdown to Earth Hour 2022" virtual roundtable discussion on March 26, from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., will talk about the environmental issues that the next set of leaders of the country should focus on.

The yearly global switching off of lights will be observed from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Philippines. Over 150 countries around the world will also follow suit as part of this one-of-a-kind global grassroots movement for nature. Millions of people participate every year in Earth Hour regardless of nationality or religion making a true movement of humanity for the environment.

Discussions about the loss of nature and climate change as defining issues for the country will be led by Earth Hour Philippines national director Atty. Angela Consuelo Ibay, with panelists WWF-PH Child Ambassador Xia Vigor, WWF-PH National Youth Council member and ASEAN Youth Advocates founder Mirus Ponon, The Green Thumb Coalition convenor Jaybee Garganera, Ten Knots director of sustainability Mariglo Laririt, and Rodel Cabigal, president of United Ilijan Agricultural Workers for Sustainable Development.

The countdown event will be hosted by WWF-PH ambassadors Pia Wurtzbach and Marc Nelson, who are both active advocates of nature.

"It is high time that we educate ourselves and our fellow Filipinos about environmental issues that we face, especially now that we are about to elect a new set of leaders who will lead us in the next six years," Wurtzbach said in support of Earth Hour 2022.

"Earth Hour is a step forward towards the goal to collectively act for our environment. We should cast our votes for leaders who will commit to address the worsening environmental issues," Wurtzbach added.

With the theme "Shape our future," the environmental movement aims to be a platform to encourage and mobilize collective action for the environment by educating and inspiring everyone, especially government leaders, to act for nature and climate.

Earth Hour 2022 movement takes the opportunity to educate and empower Filipino voters to #ChangeTheEnding for the Philippines by highlighting the issues in biodiversity conservation and climate change, and raise these issues with people seeking office in the coming elections.

Along with the aim to encourage people to switch off in solidarity with the planet, the Earth Hour 2022 also serves as a call to action to make every individual realize their role in shaping a new future for the people and the planet by taking small steps towards building a sustainable lifestyle as well as urging the government and large-scale companies to help build a fairer, nature-positive and net-zero carbon future.



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LETTERS

WHY PH NEEDS A GREEN-MINDED PRESIDENT

WE seldom hear politicians outrightly campaign for environmental policies.

In the recently concluded CNN Philippines presidential debates at our university (University of Santo Tomas), I cannot help but be alarmed that the questions posed to the candidates did not even touch on environment-related platforms. On top of this, green policies are not reflected in the candidates' major campaigns.

It is high time that environmental policies should be part of the mainstream agenda for the next president of the Philippines. The absence of green policies has ramifications on ordinary people's lives. Al-

though not seen in plain sight, the change in climate contributes to armed conflicts across the world as states vie for limited resources.

The Philippines is ravaged by typhoons, earthquakes, and landslides every year. People living in poverty are the most vulnerable and bear the disastrous impacts of these catastrophes. Yet, every year, it's always the same news—deaths, destroyed houses, damage to agriculture, crowded evacuation centers. Should this always be the fate of the Filipino people?

What is toxic about this is that survivors of disasters are always praised for their resil-

ience when the government could have put in place safeguards that protect and prepare them for such calamities. This is why it's crucial that the country's next president should have unwavering support and participation in green policies, and honor commitments to international treaties. As the Latin legal maxim says: *salus populi est suprema lex*, the welfare of the people is the supreme law.

A president for the environment is a president for the people.

EDUARDO FAJERMO,
eduardo.fajermo.ab@ust.edu.ph



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Climate crisis: The need to build the resilience of communities

By DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL AMY E. POPE
International Organization for Migration

Typhoon Rai, locally known as Odette, smashed the Philippines three months ago, sweeping through 11 of the country's 17 regions, destroying or damaging over two million houses, far eclipsing that of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Approximately 32,200 people remain displaced mostly in evacuation centers.

The road to a full recovery will be long and full of challenges. Yet returning from my field visit to Siargao, Philippines, I was inspired by the "Bayanihan" spirit. From the community where people are assisting their fellow neighbors to rebuild their houses, to the intervention led by local government units, mayors, governors and national level counterparts, the desire to recover and help one another in times of a crisis is palpable and something that will stay with me long after my visit.

This typhoon, however, must serve as a wake-up call to the international community. The Global Climate Risk Index 2020 ranks the Philippines as the second most vulnerable country in the world affected by climate change despite being one of the smallest contributors to CO2 emissions. More than 60 percent of the Filipino population resides in coastal areas and will be forced to move with one-meter sea rise brought about by global warming — that equates to 60 million people having to move by the end of this century. As President Duterte warned in his address during the 76th United Nations (UN) General Assembly, "the risks and burden of a warming climate are simply not the same for everyone. ... But here

we are now at a critical tipping point, where failure to act leads to cataclysmic consequences for the whole of humankind."

Knowing that climate impact is inevitable and recognizing that failure to act will be cataclysmic, there are three things we must do now to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change on human life.

First, we have seen time and again that human mobility is inextricably linked to climate change. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Philippines. Migration is one of the coping mechanisms of affected Filipinos facing climate crisis, either as a choice or a force of circumstance. We must acknowledge that the protection of the most vulnerable should be at the forefront of our climate action, and collectively build migration into our climate change mitigation measures. National and regional policies must include more migration adaptation measures, and resources are needed to address and prevent displacements while increasing people's resilience, especially in the most vulnerable countries.

Second, it is imperative to ensure that adaptive migration as a solution is safe, informed, and desired. For instance, IOM is working closely with the Philippines government and communities on planned relocation and transitional sites in typhoon affected areas. Through the generous support from donors such as USAID, Australia, Japan, Canada, UN Central Emergency Fund and Germany, IOM is providing critical shelter assistance, hygiene and sanitation, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), health and covid prevention and mental health and psychosocial services. While essential, these actions are primarily reactive.

Our actions in the field today can and should be a pathway towards managing climate vulnerabilities. They must be done proactively and strategically in a contextually grounded manner and with strong community engagement.

Finally, we need to harness the power of the estimated 10 million Filipinos living abroad to strengthen climate resilience locally. The Philippines is a country that has for decades made the most out of migration. Since the 1980s, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) have been hailed as "bagong bayani" (modern-day heroes). In 2019, remittances from OFWs reached a record high of USD 33.9 billion, equivalent to nearly 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

With one of the largest diasporas in the world, we need to leverage this support and direct these financial contributions to build back better using the lessons learned from past climate emergencies — such as building four-corner roofs over home in typhoon-prone areas to protect these rebuilt communities from future devastation.

As the cost of the climate crisis is reaching irreversible heights, I depart the Philippines reflecting on the devastating impacts of Typhoon Rai and the future of the communities in the Philippines. While the "bayanihan" spirit gives me hope, we now need bold collective action to build the resilience of communities at risk, to protect the most vulnerable, and to ensure that migration remains a choice rather than a necessity.

(Amy Pope was appointed as IOM's Deputy Director General – Management and Reform, taking office on Sept. 1, 2021.)

25 MARCH 2022, FRIDAY



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NEWS ALERTS

COVID-19 NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



‘No lowering guard vs Covid’

Published 7 hours ago on March 25, 2022 12:40 AM

By **MJ Blancaflor** @tribunephil_MJB



Malacañang is urging the public to remain vigilant against the risk of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) spreading as the campaign period for candidates vying for local posts starts today.

Presidential spokesperson Secretary Martin Andanar called on Filipinos, particularly election candidates, to observe health protocols during political gatherings.

“We remain confident that people will continue to be vigilant as the local election campaign period begins,” he said through a statement sent to reporters Thursday.

The senior Palace official assured the public that the state’s Covid-19 vaccination efforts would continue during the grueling campaign period.

In recent weeks, the health department has been seeing a decrease in the number of Covid-19 cases, which experts said was a clear indication of the country’s improving pandemic situation.

The Philippines has so far recorded 3.67 million Covid-19 cases. Authorities tallied 3,572 new infections from 14 to 20 March — 13 percent lower than the cases recorded on the week prior or from 7 to 13 March.

They attributed the continuous decrease of coronavirus infections to the country’s vaccination drive.

Over 65 million people have been fully-inoculated in the Philippines as of last week, according to government data, but it was still far from the 90-million target.

It remains unseen how local campaigning would impact the state’s inoculation program, but some health officials admitted that they were anticipating a lower vaccination turnout in the coming weeks or during the campaign period for local candidates.

They predicted that some local officials would prioritize their campaign efforts over the vaccination of their constituents.

It could be an unfortunate development, as local government units are mandated to administer Covid-19 jabs to their residents.

To address such a possibility, the government tapped the private sector to boost its vaccination drive. Pharmacies and clinics have launched their respective inoculation initiatives.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2022/03/25/no-lowering-guard-vs-covid/>

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