

DATE : 25 FEB 2019

DAY : Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Cimatu touts TF Mla Bay's work, but doubts growing

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga
& SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA @sam_medenilla

THE creation of the interagency Manila Bay Task Force is meant to harmonize and speed up government efforts to rehabilitate Manila Bay, Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu asserted on Sunday, as concern grew that the cleanup was meant to mask the free pass to be given to several business groups keen on pushing reclamation projects at the bay.

Administrative Order 16 issued by President Duterte, through Executive Secretary Salvador C. Medialdea, created the task force weeks after the launch

of "Battle for Manila Bay," to ensure the "complete rehabilitation, restoration and conservation of the Manila Bay." The President designated Ci-



"We are grateful to President Duterte for prioritizing the Manila Bay rehabilitation. This order will fast-track all the work we are doing, delineate responsibilities and coordinate activities of all government agencies involved in the rehabilitation efforts."—Cimatu

matu as the task force chairman, while Interior Secretary Eduardo M. Año and Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat are vice chairmen.

The triumvirate was also behind the rehabilitation of Boracay last year.

"We are grateful to President Duterte for prioritizing the Manila

Bay rehabilitation. This order will fast-track all the work we are doing, delineate responsibilities and coordinate activities of all government agencies involved in the rehabilitation efforts," Cimatu said in a statement.

Other members of the task force are the heads of the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Department of Agriculture, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the Philippine National Police Maritime Group, the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Ports Authority.

SEE "MANILA BAY," A2

sanctions to violators including the filing of administrative or other cases against erring government officials.

Cover?

MILITANT groups on Sunday expressed fear that the planned dredging activity in Manila Bay might be a prelude to a full-scale land reclamation that will cover more than 32,000 hectares of the historic water body.

Worst, they suspect that the massive land-reclamation projects will be pursued without the benefit of thorough environmental and social impact studies.

In a statement, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said it is highly suspicious that the targeted area for dredging is also the site of the proposed 148-hectare Manila Solar City reclamation project that will occupy 3.5 kilometers of Manila Bay's shoreline.

The group issued the statement after the DPWH announced that dredging in the Baywalk area of the Roxas Boulevard will start in March as part of the ongoing rehabilitation drive of Manila Bay.

Also part of the task force are representatives of two water concessionaires in Metro Manila and nearby provinces—Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc.

"The herculean task to rehabilitate Manila Bay, seen by some as impossible, is now even more possible because it has been matched with an equally massive support from all government agencies and the private sector," Cimatu said.

Specifically, the DENR was tasked to strictly enforce Sections 16 and 19 of Republic Act 9275, or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 on the conduct of containment, removal, and cleanup operations, and the exercise or supervision and control on all aspects of water quality management in the Manila Bay Region (MBR).

It is tasked to monitor compliance with critical environmental laws, rules and regulations and issue notices of violation, cease and desist orders, and appropriate



Cimatu: Task force to speed up Manila Bay rehabilitation

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu said yesterday the creation of the inter-agency Manila Bay Task Force would harmonize and speed up government efforts to rehabilitate the Manila Bay.

The task force was created under Administrative Order No. 16 to ensure the "complete rehabilitation, restoration, and conservation of the Manila Bay."

President Duterte designated Cimatu as the task force chairman while Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año and Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat are vice chairpersons.

"We are grateful to President Duterte for prioritizing the Manila Bay rehabilitation," Cimatu said. "This order will fast-track all the work we are doing, delineate responsibilities, and coordinate activities of all government agencies involved in the rehabilitation efforts," he added.

Other members of the task force are the heads of the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, Local Water Utilities Administration, Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System, Philippine National Police Maritime Group, Philippine Coast Guard, and Philippine Ports Authority.

Also part of the task force are representatives of two water concessionaires in Metro Manila and nearby provinces – Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc.



CIMATU

"The herculean task to rehabilitate Manila Bay, seen by some as impossible, is now even more possible because it has been matched with an equally massive support from all government agencies and the private sector," Cimatu said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources was specifically tasked to strictly enforce Sections 16 and 19 of Republic Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 on the conduct of containment, removal, and clean-up operations, and the exercise or supervision and control on all aspects of water quality management in the Manila Bay region.

It is also tasked to monitor compliance with critical environmental laws, rules and regulations, and issue notices of violation, cease and desist orders, and appropriate sanctions to violators including the filing of administrative or other cases against erring government officials.

DENR also needs to collaborate with MWSS, LWUA, and DILG to

ensure that large-scale enterprises such factories, manufacturing plants, and condominium units install wastewater treatment plants or connect to central wastewater treatment facilities pursuant to Section 8 of RA 9275 and Section 28 of Presidential Decree 198 or the Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973.

It would also assist in the demolition, resettlement, of informal settler families and in the prohibition against new illegal structures along esteros, riverbanks, shorelines, and waterways in the Manila Bay in accordance with RA 7879 or the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992.

DENR is also assigned to inspect all sanitary landfills in the National Capital Region and Regions 3 and 4-A, which affect Manila Bay, and ensure that these comply with RA 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, and impose sanctions for violations.

Among its other mandates, the task force is ordered to enforce environmental laws, specifically RA 9003,

It should ensure that concerned agencies and local government units undertake appropriate measures relative to violation of environmental laws such as demolition, closure or cessation of business, and or filing of administrative action against erring persons and establishments.

Likewise, it should require public and private establishments and households to connect to existing sewerage systems or sewerage treatment plants or their own in accordance with the PD 856 or the Code on Sanitation. **(Ellalyn V. Ruiz)**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1800

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

4
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25 FEB 2019

DATE

Archdiocese of Manila opposes Manila Bay reclamation project

By **LESLIE ANN G. AQUINO**
and **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

The Archdiocese of Manila has weighed in on the planned Manila Bay reclamation projects.

"We, in the Archdiocese of Manila, are against the Manila Bay reclamation due to ecological grounds. It is against ecology," Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo said.

"It is a project for the rich and foreigners while the poor will suffer due to congestions and floodings in Manila," he said.

"It is against the poor since it will concentrate projects in Manila rather than spreading it out in the provinces," added Pabillo.

The Makabayan bloc of the House of Representatives has filed a bill seeking to declare Manila Bay a reclamation-free zone.

Under House Bill 9067, the group of pro-

gressive lawmakers seeks to prohibit all forms of reclamation activities that will affect a part of or the entire Manila Bay area.

Deputy Speaker Pangasinan Rep. Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas, on the other hand, described as "alarming" the ongoing rush to execute reclamation projects. In 2011, the Philippine Reclamation Authority had identified 102 near-shore reclamation projects covering 38,272 hectares in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Of these, 38 projects with an aggregate area of 26,234 hectares are intended to reclaim virtually the entire near-shore zone of Manila Bay, she said.

"The environmental costs far outweigh the projected economic benefits from these reclamation projects," Arenas said in filing House Resolution No. 2495.

Meanwhile, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said Administrative Order 16 creating the inter-agency under Manila Bay Task Force

would harmonize and speed up government efforts to rehabilitate the bay.

President Duterte designated Cimatu as task force chair and Interior Secretary Eduardo Año and Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat as vice chairs.

"This order will fast-track all the work we are doing, delineate responsibilities and coordinate activities of all government agencies involved in the rehabilitation efforts," Cimatu said.

Other members of the task force are the heads of the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), Philippine National Police Maritime Group, Philippine Coast Guard, and Philippine Ports Authority.



AS A MATTER OF FACT

SARA SOLIVEN DE GUZMAN

The Manila Bay crisis

The recent photos taken of Manila Bay showed the beautiful sunset and happy people strolling by the bay and a few even bold enough to take a dip in the seemingly clean waters. But the real clean up hasn't even started. Let's not get too excited over this initial feat. There's still a lot of work to be done. Remember Manila Bay waters is worst than Boracay.



Let us back track a bit and see how the Manila Bay crisis came to be. In 2008, the Supreme Court initially gave the Executive Branch, led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 10 years to rehabilitate the bay. Then on February 15, 2011, another order was issued by the high court mandating the completion of the cleanup by June 30, 2011. In the previous administration, a revised plan was drawn up, but unfortunately they never got around to achieving anything significant in its so-called "Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy." To sum it all up, nothing was really done to the Manila Bay problem.

It must be noted that the Manila Bay area covers 8 provinces and 178 local governments in 3 regions, namely: National Capital Region (NCR), Central Luzon, and Calabarzon. Its drainage area covers 1,994 kilometers and its coastline stretches some 190 kilometers. Manila Bay also has 17 principal river systems draining into it, namely: Angat River, Bocaue River, Sta. Maria River, Marilao River, Meycauayan, Meycauayan-Valenzuela River, Pasig River, Parañaque River, Imus River, Ylang-ylang River, Rio Grande, Cañas River, Obando River, Navotas-Malabon-Tinajeros-Tullahan River, Talisay River, Guagua River, and Pampanga River. So, you can just imagine the amount of filth that flows from these rivers to Manila Bay. Added to this is the non-existent sewerage system.

Now, there are allegations that both Manila Water and Maynilad have failed to provide sewerage system in the past 10 years.

It has been 11 years since the Supreme Court's order. The government is finally doing something about it. News reports last week said that 5 establishments along Manila Bay including Max's Restaurant UN Orosa, HengFeng Kitchenette, Jollibee Macapagal Biopolis, Lamer Catering, and Nihon Bashitei Japanese Food were served "cease and desist" order by the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) for water pollution.

It was also mentioned in the same report that Aloha Hotel, Sarmiti Food Corp (Shawarma Snack Center) and Oriz Auto Leasing Philippines Corp were asked to explain their violations within a 15-day period. Notices of violations for water pollution will also be issued to Heritage Condominium Corp, Ma. Natividad Building, Marina Square Properties Inc (Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila), Cultural Center of the Philippines (main building and production design center), Federal Land Inc (The New Blue Wave), First Marbella Condominium Association Inc, Gold Quest Premiere Resources Inc (The Biopolis), Harrison Lodge, Libertad Tourist Development Inc (Halina Lodge/Hotel), OWWA Building, and Wellcross Freight Corp.

We should be glad that finally we have a DENR Secretary who is trying to get things done. But wait, like I said earlier, let's not get too excited. There are still things that need to be worked out by the government to ensure the sustainability of the project. While Secretary Cimatú is at it, he should make sure his officers will do things the right way. There should be a well studied plan with professional consultants. The agency has not made any mention of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan I wrote about a few months back. I did say that the pollution of Manila Bay is far worse than

Boracay (1000 times).

Just like Boracay, Manila Bay won't be in a crisis state, if only the responsible agencies (DENR, LGUs etc.) have consistently and strictly carried out their mandate. Where are the project management skills of these officials? If they are really doing their regular monitoring and evaluation functions, the crisis could have been avoided and corrective actions could have been done earlier.

Why only punish the establishments when the agencies failed in the first place. Till now, no actions have been taken to fire the inept government officials. The government is always good at finding solutions when it has already reached the crisis stage.

What about the proposed Manila Bay Development Authority (MBDA) that will handle the rehabilitation and management of the bay area? This is meant to be a permanent body that will be created by law. The group Manila Bay Initiative (MBI) with my friend Rick Ramos as convenor is now working on the bill. They need the MBDA for focus and continuity.

Several agencies and private organizations would want to see this project work. The Philippine Coast Guard alongside its Coast Guard Auxiliary has always been at the forefront of the Battle for Manila Bay. It has silently fulfilled its mandate of marine environmental protection without much fanfare. It has conducted countless symposia, information dissemination, and organizing the youth in coastal clean-ups, on a monthly basis. It has collected empirical data over the years that have been used to enact legislation against the use of plastic bags, straws and take-away styrofoam containers. It has also helped collect irrefutable evidence against shipping lines and land-based factories and establishments that do not comply with maritime laws on the waste management.

Last week, President Duterte created a task force that would speed up the rehabilitation and restoration of Manila Bay through Administrative Order 16. Environment Secretary Roy Cimatú will chair the Manila Bay Task Force, while Tourism Secretary Bernadette Puyat and Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año will serve as vice chairs.

Its members include chiefs of Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metro Manila Development Authority, Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, Local Water Utilities Administration, Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System, Philippine National Police Maritime Group, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Ports Authority, as well as representatives of the Manila Water Company Inc. and Maynilad Water Services.

The task force is expected to enforce relevant laws to ensure the rehabilitation and conservation of Manila Bay, improve its water quality, implement a comprehensive plan for massive relocation of informal settler families, facilitate information drive on Manila Bay clean-up, among others.

Local government units in Metro Manila, especially those along Manila Bay, and governors in the provinces of Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan and Cavite were given orders to ensure the implementation of critical environmental laws and other relevant laws. President Duterte said, "The convergence of national government agencies and LGUs in the Manila Bay region and the active participation of private and public stakeholders are necessary to facilitate the robust and integrated implementation of all rehabilitation and restoration efforts at the Manila Bay."

Once the rehabilitation of Manila Bay is completed, how does the government intend to measure the impact and success of the intervention? How about the sustainability issue? To monitor its progress and success, clear and specific indicators are needed (e.g. level of coliform, number of informal settlers who returned to Manila Bay after relocation, number of barangays and officials who continue defying and ignoring ordinances, number of arrests made on littering, volume of trash collected etc.).

The Battle for Manila Bay is a "whole nation" approach. No one department or LGU can lay claim to the liberation of Manila Bay. It has to be every one of us contributing to its preservation. The current state of the Bay is only the first phase of a long-drawn development plan that does not and should not end with the current administration.

Are we celebrating prematurely? Wait till another typhoon comes and see if the trash won't flood Manila Bay again.





COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Saving Manila Bay

In last week's *Kapihan sa Manila Bay*, we continued our focused discussions on the rehabilitation of Manila Bay. We have invited Manila City Administrator Atty. Erickson "Jojo" Alcovendaz, Jennifer Rufo of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Jeric Sevilla of Manila Water Co. Inc. whose respective offices are among the members of the newly created Manila Bay Rehabilitation Task Force.



Created under Administrative Order (AO) No. 16 that President Rodrigo Duterte signed on Feb. 19, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) headed by Secretary Roy Cimatu was designated as its lead agency. President Duterte also designated Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año and Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Berna Romulo-Puyat as vice-chairpersons of the Task Force.

It can be gleaned from the composition of the Task Force under AO 16 the "wholistic," or "holistic" as others would spell it, program laid down to fully implement the 2008 mandamus of the Supreme Court to clean up and rehabilitate the Manila Bay.

The President empowered the Task Force to enforce the country's sanitation code "to ensure the complete rehabilitation, restoration and conservation of the Manila Bay." They can also require all structures and facilities around Manila Bay, including households, "to immediately connect existing sewage lines to available sewerage treatment plants (STPs), or to construct individual STPs."

This is to enable the Task Force to perform its mandate under AO 16 to improve the water quality of Manila Bay by reducing the coliform level in all of its major river systems and tributaries.

The President issued the same marching orders to local chief executives in Metro Manila, Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan and Cavite to "ensure implementation of critical environmental laws... within their respective territorial jurisdictions." The Task Force is mandated to craft a comprehensive plan for "massive relocation" of informal settler families (ISF) – the politically correct term for squatters – living around the Manila Bay.

According to Cimatu, only 15 percent of the water-served population in the National Capital Region is connected to a sewer system with either the Maynilad Water or the Manila Water. But more than 200,000 ISF residing along esteros and riverbanks discharge human wastes at the waterways that eventually end up at the Manila Bay.

Long before AO16 was issued, the Task Force has already issued cease-and-desist orders against commercial establishments and several government buildings for supposedly not having STP and contributing to the pollution of the Manila Bay.

For the part of Maynilad and Manila Water, the two water concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), representatives explained that commercial establishments, not them, have the obligation to install their own sewage treatment plants (STP) that will process their wastewater before being discharged eventually to sewer lines.

During our *Kapihan sa Manila Bay*, Rufo explained that both Maynilad and Manila Water cannot accept the wastewater of the commercial establishments because the concessionaires' mandate is for domestic waste only. "But we can accommodate them and they inter-connect with our waste water treatment facility for as long as they have their pre-treatment facility," Rufo cited.

This is because, she pointed out, the wastewater being produced by the commercial establishments mostly contain chemical effluents unlike the normal domestic household wastewater.

Under their respective contracts with the MWSS, the two concessionaires agreed to operate, maintain and invest in the water and sewerage system. Speaking for the concessionaires, Rufo and Sevilla enumerated sites of their respective STPs and additional investments to put up more but are currently being constrained by issues of right-of-way for land acquisition where they would construct the facilities.

Rufo cited Maynilad's latest investment – the construction of a P1.2-billion STP in Paranaque City which was inaugurated last month. In their other serviced areas where there are no available lands, she disclosed, Maynilad put up modular-sized STP like those in certain areas in Quezon City.

While indeed the two concessionaires are the ones investing for the construction of STPs, these are also our own investments because we, as consumers, pay for 20% environmental fee as reflected in our monthly water bills. The 20% is based on our monthly water consumption plus the foreign currency differential adjustment (FCDA) applicable to all customers.

The FCDA accounts for fluctuations of the Philippine peso against other foreign currencies, subject to periodic review and adjustment. This to enable the two concessionaires to pass on to us consumers the payment of their foreign debts to bankroll their investments on construction of STP.

What most households might not know is we can demand to have our septic tanks in our homes siphoned off. This is part of the concession contracts of both Manila Water and Maynilad with the MWSS.

Speaking for the Manila Water, Sevilla noted many Metro Manila households are not availing of this service because, in most cases, they could not find where their septic tanks are located at their homes.

There is no sewer charge for residential customers which, according to Sevilla, Manila Water customers can avail of at least every five years. But for semi-business customers, commercial and industrial customers covered by a sewer line connection, Manila Water imposes 30% of basic charge as sewer fee.

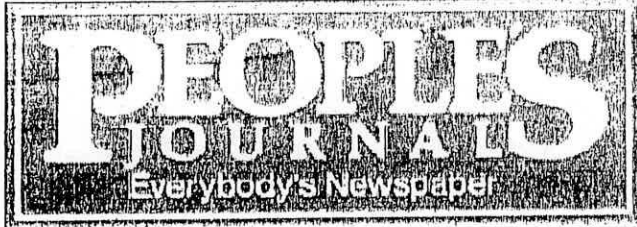
Thus, it is not only the concern of the government to save Manila Bay. Everyone must take the burden to undo the environmental degradation of the waters of the Manila Bay. Using grease traps in our kitchen is a simple way to help save Manila Bay, Sevilla urged.

Saving the Manila Bay starts right in our homes for all of us living around the famed site of the picturesque setting of the sun in this part of the country's capital city. It starts from our kitchen all the way to our toilets.





Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



12
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25 FEB 2019

DATE

Inter-agency task force to hasten Manila Bay rehab

THE creation of the inter-agency Manila Bay Task Force would harmonize and speed up government efforts to rehabilitated the polluted water body.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu also welcomed the creation of the task force which was created under Administrative Order 16 issued by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, through Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, to ensure the "complete rehabilitation, restoration and conservation of the Manila Bay."

Under the AO, Cimatu was designated as the task force chair while Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año and Tourism

Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat as vice chairs. The triumvirate was also behind the successful rehabilitation of Boracay last year.

"We are grateful to President Duterte for prioritizing the Manila Bay rehabilitation. This order will fast track all the work we are doing, delineate responsibilities and coordinate activities of all government agencies involved in the rehabilitation efforts," Cimatu said.

Other members of the task force are the heads of the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Department of Agriculture, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Pasig River Rehabilitation

Commission, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the Philippine National Police Maritime Group, the Philippine Coast Guard, and the Philippine Ports Authority. Also part of the task force are representatives of two water concessionaires in Metro Manila and nearby provinces—Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc.

The Manila Bay Region has a coastline of 190 kilometers and covers Central Luzon, CALABARZON (Regions III and IV-A) and the National Capital Region. It consists of 178 local government units and 17 major river systems. **Cory Martinez**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

PHOTO ESSAY DAILY
INQUIRER

A8
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25 FEB 2019

DATE



INO

GONE FISHING Sunday is just another work day for a fisherman hoping for a good catch. While the coliform levels in Manila Bay have gone down, the government says there is more work to be done before the water quality improves significantly. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

VISIT SITE FOR MORE
PHOTO ESSAYS
frame.inquirer.net



Trusted Since 1930

The Manila Times

A-3
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BATTER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25 FEB 2019

DATE



OFF WITH THE BENCHES Workers demolish benches along Baywalk in Manila as the rehabilitation of Manila Bay continues. PHOTO BY RUSSELL PALMA



25 FEB 2019

DATE

TITLE: _____

PAGE 1/ _____



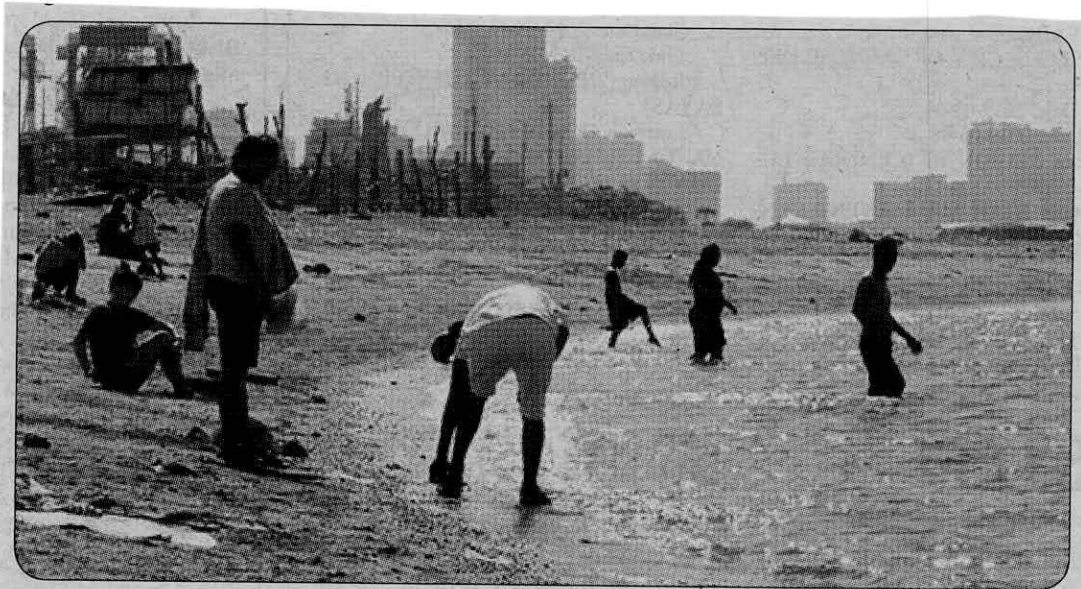
Patuloy ang ginagawang rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay at ang kahabaan ng Roxas Boulevard para maibalik ang kagandahan nito. (Patrick Adalin)



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



25 FEB 2019
DATE



SA KABILA na mahigpit na ipinagbabawal ng pamahalaan ay tuloy pa rin sa pagligo sa maruming tubig ng Manila Bay ang mga residente ng Baseco Compound sa Tondo, Manila.

Kuha ni **DANNY PATA**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Balita

ANG NANGUNGUNANG PAHAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANSA

4
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25 FEB 2019
DATE



REHABILITASYON Tinibag ng mga tauhan ng Department of Public Workers and Highways ang mga sementadong upuan sa Baywalk sa Maynila, bilang bahagi ng pagpapatuloy sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay. **ALI VICOY**



DEBATE ON PROMOTING MORE TREE PLANTATIONS HEATS UP Forest protection or production?

STORY BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

WITH the campaign for the midterm elections now in full swing, campaign paraphernalia has proliferated in vote-rich areas. Campaign posters can be found almost anywhere in the urban jungle—nailed on the walls of tall buildings, on fence of houses along the roads, pedestrian overpasses, street light posts and even on trees along the highways.

Having posters nailed on it is not even among the important functions of a tree, which is becoming scarce, if not in the brink of extinction in the city and threatened in more ways than one in forests.

It is in the center of debates these days that revolve on the issue of whether forests should be kept as protection or as production forest.

Wood: A precious commodity

A VERY versatile natural resource, wood is globally used for various purposes.

In the Philippines, wood is still the preferred as fuel, for cooking in the rural areas. It is also commonly used for building construction, or for furniture.

Depending on the species, the quality of the wood products and by-products, and location or the source, the price of wood varies.

Supply shortage

THE Philippines was a major exporter of wood in the 1970s. Today, however, it has become a major importer, sourcing out about 75 percent of its wood requirement from other countries to meet the annual demand pegged at 6 million cubic meters.

According to the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the country's estimated wood-production capacity is currently 1 million cubic meters.

This means that it is importing around 5 million cubic meters of wood every year.

Economic importance

DIRECTOR Nonito M. Tamayo of the DENR-FMB said from the 1960s to early 1980s, more popularly known as "Logging Concession Era," timber production was very vigorous while log production was booming.

"Logging was then one of the backbones of the economy, providing direct employment to over 400,000 people and livelihood opportunities for over 2 million people," Tamayo told participants of the recent Forest and Wood Industry Summit in Mandaluyong City.

According to Tamayo, records show that in 1976, there were 471 logging concessions in the country, occupying around 10.6 million hectares or around 67 percent of the land of the public domain, with an estimated log production of 21.89 million cubic meters.

This contributed to 2.48 percent to the GNP with around 78,869 jobs generated.

Moreover, records also showed that logging provided the country with a valuable foreign exchange with around 50 to 75 percent of logs exported during that period.

The highest export was recorded in the late 1970s when around 7.5 million cubic meters to 7.9 million cubic meters of raw were exported annually. Total wood product exports during the same period totaled to almost 10 million cubic meters.

This accounted for almost 10 percent of the country's total export earnings.

Aquino's twin policies

BY virtue of Executive Order (EO) 23 on February 1, 2011, harvesting of trees from the natural and residual forest was banned by the administration of President Benigno Aquino III.

Subsequently, on February 24 of the same year, EO 26, establishing the National Greening Program (NGP), a massive reforestation program was put in place.

The twin-policy aimed to arrest the continuous degradation of the country's forest, in light of the increasing awareness and global call of action to reduce the risk of disaster as the world faces the worst impacts of climate change.

Based on the two presidential orders, the number of logging companies holding Integrated Forest Management Agreement (Ifma) was reduced to 102.

NGP benefits

ACCORDING to Tamayo, the policies were expected to provide an increase in country's forest cover.

"Based on the recent land cover mapping done by Namria [National Mapping and Resource Information Authority], our forest [cover] has increased from 6.84 million hectares in 2010 to 7.014 million hectares in 2015," he said.

"Of the total of 1.6 million hectares planted in 2016, around 400,000 hectares were planted to timber, which can be harvested and be a source of raw material for wood-based industry," Tamayo said.

The country's forest is delineated and classified either as protection forest that is maintained to mitigate or prevent the impact of natural hazards, and production forest that aims mainly to produce the all-important wood.



P-2

Forest protection or production?

Increasing demand

HOWEVER, despite this positive development, Tamayo said the increasing demand for wood would continue to exert pressure on the country's forests.

The solution, he said, is to encourage private-sector investment in the forestry sector to boost the country's wood-production capacity.

During his presentation at the summit, Tamayo said the total annual projected demand will require a total harvesting area of forest plantations from more than 40,000 hectares in 2011 to about 93,000 hectares in 2028.

"This is assuming that the harvestable volume of cubic meters per hectare will average at 100 cubic meters. The total harvestable area of forest plantations to meet domestic demand—55 percent of the total demand—will be more than 22,000 hectares and will almost be 52,000 hectares in 2028."

"This means that at the minimum, the annual target planting area of forest plantations to supply domestic consumption will be at least 27,000 hectares in 2015 and gradually increasing in area by at least 5 percent per annually. For example, 34,792 hectares in 2020, 44,404 hectares in 2025 and 51,403 hectares in 2028," he explained.

Taking a different path

AFTER briefly implementing the NGP, which was focused on expanding the country's forest cover, the Duterte administration is now taking a different path.

With its 2019 NGP budget slashed by half, down to just P2.6 billion from P5.2 billion in 2018, the prospect of expanding the country's forest is now up to the private sector.

In a recent telephone interview, Tamayo said the DENR-FMB will shift to "care and maintenance" mode, focusing on ensuring a high survival rate of the previously planted trees under the program.

He also vowed to conduct a review of the government's forest-protection strategy and search for new technology to boost the management of the country's forest.

The official said that any forest-expansion activity will have to be financed by the DENR's development

partners, including international financing institutions, bilateral agreements, donations from other countries, or by an international and local nongovernment organization, other national government agencies and local government units (LGUs).

Tree-plantation expansion

MEANWHILE, Tamayo said the DENR would promote the establishment of more tree plantations through public-private partnerships—a move the wood-industry players have been eagerly pushing for a long time.

Charlie H. Liu, chairman of the board of trustees of the Philippine Wood Producers Association, in his presentation at the summit, titled "Philippine Tree Plantations: A viable Answer to Inclusive Growth and Climate Change," said wood can substantially contribute to the country's inclusive growth and development goals.

The use of wood, he said, is good for the environment, the labor sector and the economy.

"I'd like to respectfully forward a simple argument: that the forest industry is one of the greenest industries the Philippines can adopt for over-all economic growth," he said.

Wood: A carbon sink

LIU argued that trees, even when felled and used, could help absorb carbon dioxide, with wood still being a carbon sink unless burned or destroyed.

Citing various sources, he said a 50-percent mass of dry wood is estimated to be carbon.

"If we are to label how much carbon dioxide is added to the atmosphere for global warming to continue worsening in an array of traditional building materials, it would look like this. Wood ranks as negative because even if it uses heat and energy to produce the outputs, its carbon-dioxide absorption still far outweighs its carbon-dioxide emission," he explained.

This could not be said for other supposedly "green-material" options.

Using more wood, he said, hence,

means better business venture, more planters of trees, more stable job creation, and sustainable income for public and private sectors.

"Increase in business activity will result in stable local jobs for Filipinos and sustainable income stream for the DENR and the government for their operations," he added.

Band-aid solution

ENVIRONMENTAL groups, however, do not share their excitement.

Via messenger, John Leo Algo, science policy officer of The Climate Reality Project Philippines, rejected the plan to promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) to establish tree plantations.

"While economically viable, plantations are more agricultural by nature. Given that you will need vast areas of land for these plantations, natural ecosystems and their biodiversity are at high risk of being diminished or completely eliminated. This is yet another example of a Band-aid solution that does not factor in the long-term implications on the environment, the economy and on local communities," he said.

This policy, he said, will also affect the country's capacity to lower its carbon footprint and honor its commitment under the Paris Agreement.

"Without proper land use and forest management policies in place, the issues that limited the effectiveness of the [NGP] may reappear or even get worse under these PPPs," he said.

"As forests are also key components of local adaptation, improper planning and unregulated plantation growth would also contribute to increased vulnerability for communities near the areas," he explained.

According to Algo, the country's forests need protection now more than ever not only because of the economic benefits they provide but also due to their importance in dealing with climate change.

He said that without the necessary technical and financial support from the government, the country's forests that are already in a poor



P-3

Forest Protection or production?

state would be at an even higher risk of deterioration, making the country even more vulnerable to climate change.

"By installing forests in unfamiliar places, we also run the risk of depleting local water sources by disrupting the water cycle. Under this system, small-scale indigenous forest users might also be more marginalized as large-scale owners would definitely seek to expand their plantations," he said.

He added that forest biodiversity and the well-being of communities near potential sites for new or expanded plantations would also be at greater risk.

He urged the government to prioritize the passage of both the National Land Use Act and the forest resources bill in the next Congress.

"This will not only enhance the protection of the primary forests left and its accompanying biodiversity, but also protect the welfare of indigenous communities that sustainably manage these areas. Proper land use and forest management will also ensure that the demand for wood will be met without disturbing what is left of the country's forests," he said.

Leon Dulce, national coordinator of Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment, agreed with Algo.

"We do not agree in promoting PPP on establishing forest plantation for two reasons. Plantations or land planted with a controlled number of species do not provide the same amount of ecosystem services as tropical rainforest have provided," he said.

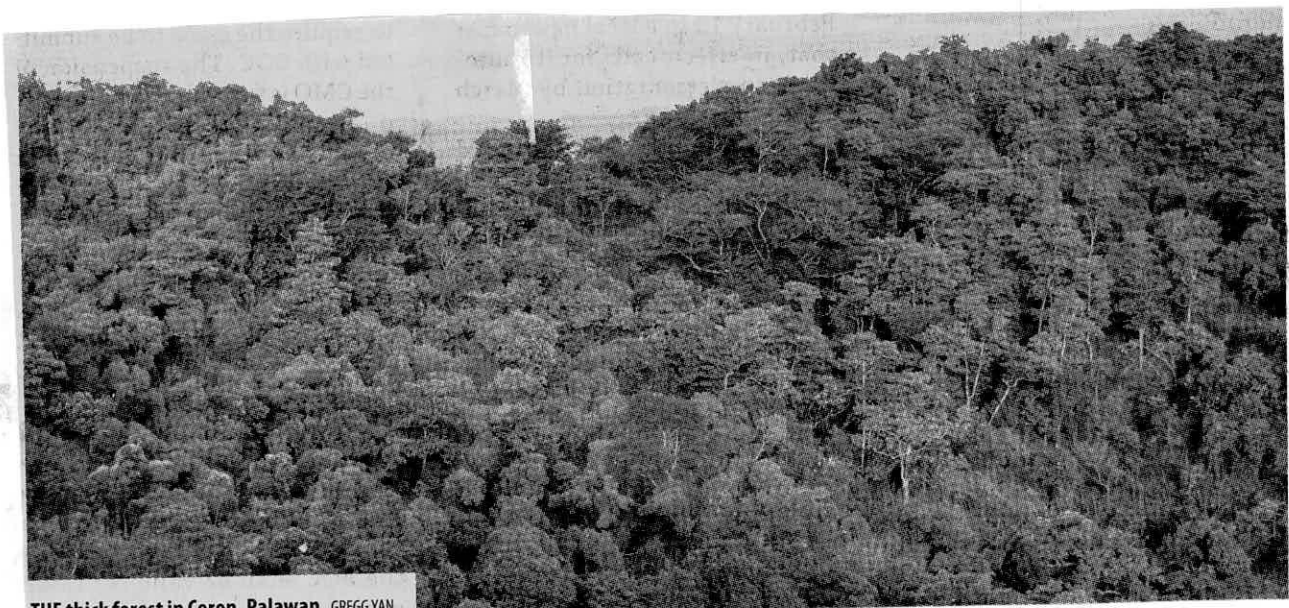
He said rehabilitating damaged rainforests has a higher amount of carbon-sequestration capacity compared to tree plantations.

"Additionally, soil and water retention on tree plantations is also low as compared to a forest with heterogeneous vegetation pattern. Secondly, PPP-led tree plantations can pave the way to land grabbing and forest privatization, denying the public from freely subsisting on these forests," he added.

Moreover, he said timber plantations are constantly logged and agroforest plantations are usually monoculture and, thus, cannot function as effective carbon sinks.

He added that private-led tree or forest plantations do not function as natural forest ecosystems. Thus, they cannot achieve optimum ecosystem services, such as flood mitigation, storm buffering, prevention of soil erosion and provisioning services necessary for the adaptation of resource-dependent communities.

For Dulce, a scientific and pro-people forest policy should be in a place where the state has the main responsibility in rehabilitating the forests and ensuring that the democratic concerns of forest resource-dependent communities are of central concern.



THE thick forest in Coron, Palawan. GREGG YAN



25 FEB 2019

DATE

Philex probes Padcal mine fire

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

The country's largest gold producer, Philex Mining Corp., is now investigating the forest fire that killed four of its employees working at its Padcal mine camp in Benguet.

A forest fire broke out Wednesday last week outside of Padcal mine within the company's reforested area in the vicinity of Sitio Banawel, Barangay Ampucao, Itogon, Benguet.

"As of press time, the inci-

dent is still under investigation," the listed mining firm said in a statement.

The regional office of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the local Philippine National Police (PNP) have already been informed of the incident.

The forest fire killed five people, four of which are Philex employees who were sent out to help prevent the fire from reaching other facilities of the mining company.



INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF AN INTL WILDLIFE EXPERT

Taking the lead in Asean

biodiversity conservation

HOW will you make sure that everyone—from policy-makers and business leaders to their employees, and even school children—are aware of and practice biodiversity conservation in their daily activities?

This is the challenging mission of Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, international wildlife expert and executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

Growing up with accounts from her mother about how the forests of Sierra Madre, the longest mountain range in the Philippines, saved people's lives during World War II by providing food and shelter, Lim developed her love for nature as she learned about how barks of trees can be turned into blankets and wild plants can ease the hunger of people in hiding.

The wild animals she encountered during her practicum in Kawit, Cavite, as a veterinary medicine student at the University of the Philippines further inspired her fascination with fauna. After seeing baby marine turtles, she decided to work on them for her thesis, which involved isolation of fungus that infects the said animals.

Lim's study on the marine turtles launched her career in wildlife conservation with the Philippines's Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), where she started with the marine turtle program. The rest is continuing history of her work and contribution to conservation.

In her more than one and a half decades as director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), formerly the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau of the DENR, Lim guided national directions on protected areas and wildlife conservation.

She closely worked with the Philippine Congress on the legislative priorities for conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in the country. Among her notable achievements were the development of the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System bill that became a law, the National Ecotourism Strategy, and the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

She was also recognized by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu as instrumental in increasing government budget for biodiversity conservation to as much as 70 percent in the last six years.

As director of ACB, assuming a leadership role that involves multiple countries is not new for Lim.

She has taken on various international functions, such as chairman of the Convention on

Biological Diversity (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, which provides the Conference of the Parties to the CBD with timely advice relating to the implementation of the convention.

She was chairman of the 15th and 18th Meetings of the Asean Working Group Meeting on Coastal and Marine Environment, which serves as a consultative forum to promote coordination and collaboration among various relevant Asean and other regional marine-related initiatives to ensure a well-coordinated and integrated approach to the conservation and sustainable management of the coastal and marine environment.

Lim was the chairman of the 4th Asean Experts Group on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna Meeting; chairman of the 16th Asean Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, which provides technical guidance and enhances cooperation among Asean member-states in the promotion of conservation of nature and biodiversity; and chairman of the Asean Wildlife Enforcement Network.

Biodiversity 101

LIM believes that biodiversity and human lives are interconnected.

"Biodiversity is an inseparable part of human life. It provides us with food, air and water; materials for clothing and shelter; ingredients for medicines; protection from climate change; materials for business, industries and infrastructure; source of income from agriculture, fisheries, tourism and other livelihood for millions of poor all over the world; and even inspiration for arts and culture. "Lose biodiversity and you lose all these," she explained.

She added that for wildlife, diseases are always connected to the condition of the ecosystem. This she learned from her wildlife management and disease post graduate course in the United Kingdom during her early days with the DENR.

"From that course I realized as a veterinarian that you don't just treat—you manage the habitat. You protect the ecosystem where the wildlife thrives," she noted.

Lim observed during her field work in other countries how the occurrence of emerging diseases is the same then and now.

"In Europe, there used to be a Scottish wolf that was extirpated by the people, not realizing that these wolves control the population of the red deer. This led to the overpopulation of the red deer, which carried the tick that



P-2

Taking the lead in Asean biodiversity conservation

also transmitted the deadly Lyme disease to humans.

"Now, we have the Avian influenza, the Ebola virus. It happened before, it's still happening now with other diseases. This shows that increased human impact, such as eradicating certain predators, can lead to diseases."

Integrating biodiversity conservation in development sectors

SINCE taking her oath as ACB's leader in April 2018, Lim has advocated the linkage of biodiversity with development sectors—such as health, agriculture, banking and finance, infrastructure, climate change and tourism through a series of international workshops and meetings.

These activities identified action points for the convergence of each sector with biodiversity toward integrating or mainstreaming conservation in sectoral plans and processes.

The challenge in mainstreaming, she said, is reaching out to other sectors. "Explaining to them the importance of biodiversity—how do you start catching their attention? How and why will they listen to you? What would interest them?"

Lim learned that it is important to "use their language" in discussing with the sectors. "You do not talk about biodiversity, but about wild relatives of commercially important crops, nature-based tourism, traditional medicine and terminologies that would resonate more to the sector you want to engage."

Besides the key sectors mentioned, Lim also saw opportunities for mainstreaming in other

nontraditional areas. As wife of a military officer, she observed that conservation can be incorporated in national defense through their civil relations programs.

"Conservation can be mainstreamed through rehabilitation activities, such as tree-planting," she added.

"In civil aviation, modernization of airports need bird-control measures. Infrastructure planners should be mindful that the Philippines is a migratory pathway. Airport modernization entails risks to the environment, so how do you minimize that risk? How do you reduce that risk without necessarily affecting the population of migratory birds? We need to have science-based measures for this."

Understanding and working through biodiversity threats and challenges

ACCORDING to Lim, the three most important biodiversity issues that Asean member-states need to prioritize are (in no particular order) marine pollution, people's lack of knowledge and education on biodiversity, and lack of research.

"When I was still with the DENR, we rescued turtles with plastics and trash in their stomachs. Today, we still see similar news, including the islands of trash in the ocean. This is a problem that needs constant and persistent efforts."

Another important concern, according to Lim, is enhancing knowledge and education about biodiversity, and helping people understand that the natural ecosystem can address current and major global issues like climate change and poverty.

"If you protect your biodiversity, you can contribute to

climate-change adaptation; you can contribute to livelihood development. Lack of knowledge on biodiversity within the development sector can jeopardize the environment," she explained.

"Biodiversity research, meanwhile, is a constant necessity because you cannot love and conserve what you do not know. You need to have an inventory of what is in nature and understand them. What is the importance of certain species?"

"Research will be able to provide you answer. There are certain plants or animals that are sources of substances that can cure illnesses. If you are not able to understand them, then you cannot harness their full potential," Lim said.

"But that should not stop with research. Just like in any field, you need to communicate new knowledge. People need to understand what biodiversity is as a sector, and its relation to their daily lives. You need to establish the science so that you can better communicate it," she explained.

Coexistence of biodiversity and development

"BASICALLY, biodiversity and development should not be viewed as separate from each other. It's not biodiversity or development, it is biodiversity and development," Lim emphasized.

When it comes to making decisions on technologies that make use of natural resources, Lim believes in always having the best scientific information at hand.

"The important thing is maximizing what is available in nature. That is why research is very important. Taxonomy, for example, is a field that can help in further



P-3

Taking the lead in Asean biodiversity conservation

understanding what's in our environment," she added.

"We need strong scientists, and we need strong communicators too. Convening a scientific forum is an opportunity to help facilitate discussion at the scientific level, but it should not end there.

"Eventually, we need to convince the communications people to help us convey the outcome of that forum, and then eventually translate the outcome into policy. That is the important connection to be made—establishing the science, communicating it, translating it to policy and realizing it in the community," Lim said.

Balance: Key to a healthy environment and personal life

WITH all her achievements, Lim, who grew up from a close-knit family, is quick to attribute a huge part of her success to her kin and staff.

Her mother, who loves to grow lush greenery in their backyard, is particularly a major influence on her love for nature. From her father, she learned discipline and other important family life lessons.

"Support from my family is really a huge help. With my husband in the military and assigned elsewhere, and I was in the field back then, I would ask for help from my siblings, my mother, and even mother-in-law in taking care of my children. Come to think of it, I don't think I could have survived my work if it were not for them," said the wildlife expert.

Her advice for young ones who would like to take a similar path as hers: "You should walk your talk, lead by example and pray, because there are crossroads and decisions to be made, and there are things out of your control. You also have to choose your battles, because when you think about all the problems in the environment, you can get overwhelmed."

"Start from yourself. Don't think that because you are alone, you will only have a small impact. Just imagine if you start from one, and then expand—take it one step at a time. Work with others, because you can only do so much alone. Through working with partners, there will be multiplier effects with your work."

Recently, flora and a fauna species were named after Lim. The *Kurodaia (Conciella) theresamunditae*, which is a louse species found in the Philippine scops owl; and the *Medinilla theresae*, an edaphic-endemic species of a terrestrial, erect, cauliflorous shrub in Dinagat and Mindanao Islands in the Philippines.

Sophia Mercado/ACB



LIM emphasizes the value of "maximizing what is in nature" when it comes to natural resource management and development of new technologies. DESIREE EVE MAAÑO



Text BRIGADE

Mga reporter ng bayan

I-text sa 09293852536

Maging reporter ng inyong lugar. I-text lang ang inyong mga nakikitang iligal, katiwalian at krimen para makarating sa mga awtoridad. Ang inyong celfone number at seguridad ay aming pangangalagaan.

- Editor

Paging DENR: Mabahong hangin mula sa may Tacloban fish port

Magandang araw po. Isa po akong concern citizen ng Tacloban. Report ko lang po ang mabahong hangin na nalanghap ng mga costumer at ng mga vendor sa new building kalapit ng Tacloban fish port. Sobrang baho po ng hangin sa kadahilanang ang mga basura raw ay nakatambak lang sa likod ng nasabing building, at doon rin dinudurog o prinoproceso ang mga basura. Kaya ang amoy ay kumakalat sa building na iyon. Paki aksyunan po dahil kawawa naman ang mga costumer lalong lalo na yung nga vendor. P.S. Dont post my number. - Concerned citizen



25 FEB 2019

DATE

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

Digong: Taal Lake mabubura 'pag hindi nalinis

Nagbabala si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na posibleng dumating ang araw na mabubura ang pamosong Taal Lake sa lalawigan ng Batangas kapag patuloy na pinabayaan ang kalagayan nito sa kasalukuyan.

Inihayag ito ng Pangulo nang dumalo sa campaign rally ng mga senatorial candidate ng

PDP-Laban sa Biñan, Laguna.

Sabi ng Pangulo, sakay siya ng helicopter at kanyang napagmasdan mula sa himpapawid ang kalagayan ng Taal Lake.

"Pag hindi ninyo dinredge (dredge) 'yan in less than 50 years, tabla na kayo. Ma-anona," anang Pangulo.

"Kasi lahat ng dumi,

kasi lahat ng doon napupunta na sa inyo.

I was --- sa helicopter kita ko 'yung bahay, stretching, and you can see the light sa --- pagkasabi ko nga... Ano ba sabihin ko doon?" dagdag ng Pangulo.

Pero, ipinasa na nito sa susunod na pangulo ng bansa ang responsabilidad para maayos ang kalagayan ng lawa.



Trusted Since 1938

The Manila Times

B6
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25 FEB 2019

DATE

Turning plastic into play

MONDELEZ Philippines has launched a program to help turn plastic packaging waste into play areas for its adopted Joy Schools. This project is in support of the Company's global 2025 commitment to make all packaging recyclable, provide recycling information, and support public-private partnerships to help reduce waste and improve recycling.

Plastic waste and its impact on the planet is a broad, systemic issue that a lot of people care deeply about, and which requires a holistic response. As a company which aims to empower people to snack right, Mondelez Philippines wants to help minimize plastic waste as part of a global long-term vision for zero-net waste packaging.

Locally, one of the company's programs to help address this is-



■ During the launch, from left: Anchel Cruz, First Balfour HR senior supervisor; Ashish Pisharodi, Mondelez Philippines country director; Assistant Principal Dr. Flora Baggayan of Camp Claudio Elementary School; and Boi Mojica, assistant department head of the City Environment and Natural Resources in Paranaque City, where two of the schools are located.

sue is the Joy Schools Plastic Play Areas project. The Joy Schools is Mondelez Philippines' signature community program across South

East Asia which aims to empower children to take positive steps towards their overall well-being. The Joy Schools currently provides

a daily 9-month feeding for 300 undernourished students in the country to help improve their nutrition and increase energy for school.



Govt may spend P1 trillion to expand Pinoys' access to safe water, toilets

By CAI U. ORDINARIO [@caiordinario](#)

THE national government is eyeing to spend P1.069 trillion in the next 12 years to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets on water supply and sanitation (WSS).

Documents pertaining to the proposed Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan (PWSSMP) obtained by the BUSINESSMIRROR, showed that the investment requirements of the government will be for 2019 until 2030.

Goal 6 of the SDGs aim to increase to 95 percent the access of the population to safe water, and 97 percent basic sanitation services by 2022 and universal access by 2030. The goal also aims to end open defecation by 2022.

"The formulation of the PWSSMP is in its final stages, with the Master Plan and its key supplemented documents currently being refined [i.e., Regional Roadmaps, Audio-Visual Presentation, Information Materials, Water Supply and Sanitation Database, and Business Cases]," the document read.

The bulk, or 69 percent of the budget, pegged at P734 billion will be spent to achieve short-term targets by 2023, while 31 percent or P335 billion will be spent in the run up to achieving the targets by 2030. Around P1.13 billion will be spent for nonphysical investments.

Physical investments for water sanitation will take up the bulk of the investments at P456 billion between 2019 and 2023, and P102 billion by 2024 to 2030.

In terms of water supply, investments will amount to P278 billion between 2019 and 2023, and P233 billion in 2024 to 2030. Nonphysical investments will reach P660 million between 2019 and 2023, as well as P470 million in 2024 to 2030.

"The execution of the PWSSMP includes three phases. The pre-investment phase starts in 2019. The Investment Program covers the projects in 2020 to 2023, and 2024 to 2030. Implementing the projects requires the commitment and collaboration

among agencies in the WSS sector, and a strong champion is key to coordinating all efforts. While the envisioned apex body is being considered, a project management office can assume this role in the interim," the documents read.

Department of Water

FORMER Environment Secretary Elisea Gozon, the lead author of the Water Executive Order and the bill to create the Department of Water, said recent developments such as the closure of Boracay and the Manila Bay cleanup are "encouraging."

Gozon said the proposal to create a separate Department of Water has been around since the time of former President Fidel V. Ramos. However, it was only now under the Duterte administration, was it given serious attention.

"We need an apex body that has the strong political support and clout. I'm really happy that in the past months, the President has also focused on issues of water. We hope to build on that. Beyond just the water quality, its really more overall water management and we need to ensure that all aspects of water management are actually covered," Gozon said.

In order to fast-track efforts to create the new department, Gozon said the government will come up with an executive order on water. The EO seeks to transform the National Water Resources Board into the National Water Management Council (NWMC).

The NWMC will act as the interim body to pave the way for the Department of Water or Department of Water Resources, which is well-within the powers of the President. The President, Gozon said, has the authority to restructure the entire Executive branch.

Gozon said these developments could not have been more needed as the country's water resources are already under stress.

Documents obtained by the BUSINESSMIRROR showed that 87.68 percent of the population are getting water from safe sources while the remaining 12.32 percent are getting water from unsafe sources.



MANILA WATER FETES TOKA PARTNERS: Manila Water recently paid tribute to various local government units and national government agencies who have been staunch partners and supporters of the Toka Toka advocacy campaign, the country's first and only environmental movement focused on wastewater or used water management. The awarding to LGUs and NGAs was led by Manila Water president and CEO Ferdinand Dela Cruz, chief operating officer Geodino Carpio, along with Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Martin Dino, MMDA director Josie Faulan, DPWH- NCR maintenance head Rey Rosario, DENR-NCR assistant director Gwendolyn Bambalan. Also present are officials from DSWD-NCR, PRRC, DENR-EMB-NCR along with representatives of Quezon City, Pateros, San Juan, Binangonan, Taytay, Angono, Jalajala, Cainta, Morong, Teresa, Taguig, Mandaluyong, Antipolo, Tanay, San Mateo, Rodriguez, Provincial Government of Rizal, Cardona, Pililia, Manila, Baras and Makati.



Sarangani rolls out P103-M watershed rehab project

THE provincial government of Sarangani recently rolled out a multimillion-peso rehabilitation project of the 7.9-hectare Saub watershed ecosystem in Maitum town.

Dubbed as "Watershed Ecosystem Rehabilitation and Flood Risk Reduction for Increased Resilience," the project would cost P103 million with counterpart fund sharing of P93,597,439.90 from the People's Survival Fund (PSF) and P9,325,125.10 from the Sarangani provincial fund.

The watershed covers nine barangays with a total of 1,747 households living along the 100-meter riparian zone, which are placed high-risk exposure to flooding and other climate hazards.

According to Gov. Steve Chiongbian Solon, the memorandum of agreement (MOA) sets the terms

and conditions for the release of the P93.5-million grant from the national government's flagship finance climate program, the PSF.

The PSF was created by Republic Act 9729, or the Climate Change Act of 2009. It aims to help vulnerable communities prepare for the adverse climatic events.

It is a special fund in the national Treasury for the financing of adaptation programs and projects based on the National Strategic Framework on Climate Change with at least P1 billion annual supplementary allocations to relevant climate-related program funding of the local government units.

Solon expressed excitement over the project, which will be Sarangani's biggest environmental project so far, to be implemented in early 2019.

Partnering with the province in the undertaking are the municipality of Maitum and the Mindanao State University, Mahintana Foundation Inc. and the Conrado and Ladislawa Alcantara Foundation Inc., which will provide technical assistance in the research, formulation of Saub Watershed Management Plan, project monitoring and evaluation.

The project, which took three years before the PSF board approval in July 2018, would improve the resilience of Saub watershed ecosystem to flood and associated risks caused by climate-change variability.

Since 2010, extreme flooding in Maitum has caused destruction to agricultural and structural properties and loss of lives.

The Environmental Conservation and Protection Center of Sarangani noted that flooding is the

most common hazard in the area. Flood susceptibility is computed to be 10,001 hectares for high, 5,881.65 hectares for moderate and 2,604.26 hectares for low.

The project will develop Saub watershed ecosystem resiliency and community protection through watershed governance, build the capacities of Maitum municipal government, development partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders to adapt to flood risks and impacts of climate-change variability, alleviate poverty through agro-forestry development and establish riverbank protection.

The provincial government of Sarangani will manage the project implementation and will work with the Maitum municipal government, which will provide technical and administrative support in all its stages.



Smart joins celebration of World Wetlands Day

SMART Communications joined the celebration of World Wetlands Day, underscoring the importance of wetlands in the ecosystem like mangroves, peatlands and marshes, rivers and lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice fields and even coral reefs.

Smart chose to mark the occasion at the Sasmuan Bangkung Malapad in Pampanga, home to several species of mangroves, birds and other flora and fauna. The sanctuary is considered a critical habitat and ecotourism area, and is a beneficiary of the Connected Mangroves project of Smart and Ericsson.

The Connected Mangroves project is an Internet of Things so-

lution that uses wireless connectivity to capture data relevant to mangroves' survival such as water level, humidity, soil moisture and temperature, and other hazards in the environment.

The information, which is collected by waterproof solar-powered sensors attached to mangroves, is transmitted over a cloud system to a dashboard accessible to concerned stakeholders, such as local authorities, fisherfolk and communities within the area.

Mangrove forests are important in the protection of seaside communities from typhoons, flooding, erosion and other coastal hazards, and serve as habitat for various aquatic life forms.



Despite increased production, SMC reduces water use by 23% in 2018

DIVERSIFIED conglomerate San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said it has slashed operational water use across its businesses by 23% last year, beating its goal of reducing water consumption by 20% in 2020.

In a statement, SMC said the reduction resulted in 7.7 billion liters of water saved in 2018.

The company attributed this to “the effective implementation of programs aimed at increasing use of alternative, ‘non-scarce’ water, including rainwater, recycled water, and seawater.”

SMC is undertaking the “Water for All” sustainability project, which aims to cut utility and do-

mestic use of water by 50% by 2025.

“This is a significant milestone for us, and we’re highly encouraged by these results,” Ramon S. Ang, president and chief operating officer of SMC, was quoted as saying.

“It’s only the second year since we announced this major sustain-

ability goal, and already, the effort and commitment of those in our company tasked with making this goal a reality, have started to pay off,” he added.

While total water volume for 2018 rose due to higher production and new manufacturing plants, SMC said it in-

creased the use of non-scarce water sources.

“Water is an integral part of our operations, and a vital need of our people and communities. While we’ve long worked to conserve and protect water in our areas of operation, this initiative will see us drawing

even less water in the future,” Mr. Ang said.

SMC said it also donates water facilities to communities with no access to water. Its recent beneficiaries are the municipalities of Malita in Davao Occidental, Maa-sim in Saranggani, and Mulanay in Quezon province. — **V.M.P. Galang**



SMC further cuts water use

For us, water sustainability goes beyond corporate social responsibility

San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said it significantly reduced operational water use across its businesses by 23 percent in 2018, beating its stated goal to reduce consumption by 20 percent in 2020. This, despite the conglomerate's ongoing expansion and increase in production volumes.

The initiative, which is part

of the conglomerate's ambitious "Water for All" sustainability project – which will see San Miguel and its businesses cutting utility and domestic use of water by 50 percent by 2025 – resulted in some 7.7 billion liters of water saved for the year.

This represents a 23 percent reduction in the company's total non-product water use.

SMC attributed the drop to the effective implementation of programs aimed at increasing use of alternative, "non-scarce" water, including rainwater, recycled water and seawater.

"This is a significant milestone for us and we're highly encouraged by these results," said SMC president and chief operating officer Ramon S. Ang.

"It's only the second year since we announced this major sustainability goal, and already, the effort and commitment of those in our company tasked with making this goal a reality, have started to pay off."

The company explained that while its total water volumes for the year actually increased – due to higher production and the start of operations of new manufacturing

plants – it was also able to increase utilization of non-scarce water sources.

From 4,738,338 cubic meters saved in 2017, representing 15.76 percent of the company's total non-product water use, SMC was able to save a total of 7,762,061 cubic meters of water in 2018.

"For us, water sustainability goes beyond corporate social responsibility," Ang continues. "Water is an integral part of our operations and a vital need of our people and communities. While we've long worked to conserve and protect water in our areas of

operation, this initiative will see us drawing even less water in the future."

This is a significant milestone for us, and we're highly encouraged by these results.

"Knowing that water is a finite resource, we really want to take leadership in addressing this issue because that's what responsible businesses do. Water has an impact on our business and society and we fully recognize the role we can play in water stewardship," Ang added.

In addition to its efforts to reduce water use in its operations, San Miguel also donates water systems to waterless communities throughout the Philippines. The company's goal is to increase access to water in remote barangays.

Its most recent donations benefitted communities in Malita, Davao; Maasim, Sarangani and Mulanay, Quezon.

Last January, SMC's multibillion-peso Bulacan Bulk Water Project, which will make potable water accessible to 24 water districts in the province at the lowest price per cubic meter, came onstream.