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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



DENR thumbs up pyromusical event relocation to Clark

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The relocation of the venue of the country's annual international pyromusical competition has so far not recorded any negative effect on the environment, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said.

Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said initial tests in terms of solid waste management during

the start of the 10th Philippine International Pyromusical Competition last Feb. 23 were negative.

"Results were negative within the 500 meter up to 1.5-kilometer area in terms of solid waste management," he said.

"But, we also conducted air quality test over the weekend, we have one week to know if the toxicity level is not acceptable. But as of the moment, everything is good," Antiporda added.

A few weeks ago, SM Supermalls said the 10th Philippine International Pyromusical Competition would take place in Clark in Pampanga amid the ongoing rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

"The bay area is very important in the cleanup measure and it is necessary to minimize all causes of pollution. They heeded our call to help us in the clean-up of Manila Bay and we are happy," he said.

"We are not restricting anything on the fireworks, just not in Manila Bay," Antiporda clarified.

Meanwhile, the government has already created an interagency Manila Bay Task Force that would harmonize and speed up efforts to rehabilitate the pollution-challenged water body.

The task force was created under Administrative Order 16 issued by President Duterte to ensure the "complete rehabilitation, restoration and conservation of the Manila Bay."

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu will serve as the task force chair, while Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año and Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat as vice chairs.



DENR reopens protected landscape

Climbers and hikers would have another mountain to conquer after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) yesterday recommended the reopening of Mt. Palay-Palay-Mataas-na-Gulod beginning 30 March this year.

The mountain which is a protected landscape and is situated between the borders of Cavite and Batangas will once again open its doors to public after being closed for more than three years.

To recall, the park was closed last 1 October 2016 to give way to its rehabilitation and conservation program.

The DENR through its protected area management board, however, will impose stricter rules and require guests to secure visitor management and orientation program (VMOP) first before

being allowed to come in.

VMOP was developed to manage the number of visitors entering the park and to ensure that hikers will observe established rules while inside the protected area.

PAMB said it succeeded in rehabilitating the mountain within three years which prompted it to recommend its reopening.

KCGacula



Restored Mt. Palay-Palay-Mataas-na-Gulod will be reopened to the public after being closed for three years.

Greater private sector role seen in greening program

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has issued new guidelines aimed at increasing private sector participation in the Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP).

The government's flagship reforestation initiative, under Executive Order 193 issued in 2015, seeks to cover the remaining 7.1 million hectares of open, degraded and denuded forests in the country from 2016 to 2028.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu recently signed DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2019-03, which revises the implementing rules and regulations for EO 193 to encourage more private sector players to participate in the program.

The DAO specifies three modes by which the private sector may participate in the ENGP's implementation in the remaining three years of the Duterte administration.

Under the new guidelines, the private sector may enter into a private-public partnership scheme through establishments of new ENGP plantations, maintenance and protection of existing plantations, and protection

of existing forests outside designated areas.

Those in the private sector may enter into an agreement with beneficiaries of the Community-Based Forestry Management (CBFM) program "depending on the purpose of establishment" in accordance with DENR Memorandum Circular 1998-08.

For untenured areas, private entities may develop the area under the ENGP through a memorandum of agreement (MOA) entered with DENR.

The duration of contracts with DENR partner-organizations was lengthened to five years from the original three years. This is to ensure high survival rates of trees planted in the previous years, and increase the benefits of ENGP partners.

The ENGP is the extension of the National Greening Program, which was created by virtue of EO 26

and implemented from 2011 to 2016. During its six-year implementation, the program posted an accomplishment of 1.3 billion seedlings planted in 1.7 million hectares. It also generated over four million jobs, benefitting around 558,000 individuals, through partnership with various people's organizations (POs), particularly under the DENR's CBFM program.

The Duterte administration, meanwhile, targets to reforest some 1.2 million hectares from 2017 to 2022 in accordance with the Philippine Development Plan.

From 2017 to 2018, ENGP covered areas reached 335,185 hectares, which were planted with some 299.2 million seedlings and generated a total of 715,118 jobs, benefitting some 112,166 individuals.

For long-term development, the private sector may invest in either establishment of new plantation and/or maintenance and protection of existing ENGP plantations through appropriate management arrangement.

Another innovation in the ENGP guidelines is a new mode of engagement called Reforestation by Admin-

istration (RA), which involves hiring of individuals not belonging to any POs, but have access to areas where there are no POs.

The RA scheme is to be implemented in proclaimed areas and critical watersheds not covered by any tenurial instrument.

DENR-Forest Management Bureau director Nonito Tamayo said the new guidelines were an offshoot of Cimatu's order for an audit of all ENGP sites that required ground validation to determine which areas needed replanting and closer maintenance and protection efforts.

"The Reforestation by Administration, for example is seen to address the gap in many reforestation schemes that seedlings die within the immediate period because they were planted in areas where there are no organized stakeholders engaged," Tamayo explained.

The new guidelines, he added, promote planting indigenous species, especially within protected and watershed areas, as well as high-value crops and fast-growing trees in production forests.



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SPECIAL REPORT

Manila Bay: Reclamation vs rehabilitation

(Part 2)

By IRIS GONZALES

When the Duterte administration announced the bold move that it would rehabilitate Manila Bay, environmental groups immediately hitched a ride on the issue.

It was a big and interesting issue that consistently made headlines. The different environmental groups made sure they, too, would be in the spotlight.

Thus, they reiterated their calls to protect the environment.

Reclamation, they said, could cause massive flooding, liquefaction and tsunamis among others.

Massive flooding occurs when excessive water fills normally dry areas along with flowing creeks and rivers, causing a rapid rise of water in a short amount of time. This can happen with little or no warning.

Liquefaction

In industry parlance, soil liquefaction happens when a saturated or partially saturated soil weakens in response to an applied stress.

Tsunamis, meanwhile, are giant waves caused by a displacement of large volume of water.

When an earthquake occurred on Dec. 26, 2004 in the Indian Ocean, it caused a series of tsunamis that killed more than 200,000 people in at least 13 countries.

Among those affected was Marine Beach in Chennai, India. It was hit by a tsunami and experts noted that houses had been built right up to the edge of the coast, some on reclaimed land.

These and other negatives effects are the arguments cited by environmental groups.

Thus, environmental groups said that for Manila Bay's reclamation to succeed, the different reclamation projects should not proceed.

The Climate Reality Project, for instance, said reclamation projects in Manila Bay may threaten the remaining

biodiversity in the bay.

Its country manager Rodne Galicha said in a radio interview that the government should focus first on rehabilitating Manila Bay before proceeding with the reclamation.

Galicha said the people have the right to a clean and healthful ecology.

Lawmakers, too

During a recent hearing at the House of Representatives, lawmakers also raised a howl over the many reclamation projects in the country, citing environmental issues.

"We received a lot of concerns from the environmentalist groups. They're concerned the development of the projects will pose a lot of environmental risks especially on the issue of liquefaction."

But for the PRA, reclamation and the rehabilitation of Manila Bay can go together.

It said other countries have embarked on reclamation projects as a structurally sound solution to protect their coastlines in light of recent climate change phenomena.

The PRA also said that the alleged negative consequences such as environmental degradation, flooding, land subsidence, etc. have not been established as being a direct consequence of reclamation projects.

"In this regard, the PRA's thrusts are geared toward promoting 'purposive' and 'protective' reclamations. Purposive reclamations refer to Legacy Islands on Water (LIoW); islands that are liveable, resilient, safe, sustainable, green, generative, pro-people, future-proofed and innovative and a smart community.

"Protective reclamations, on the other hand, refer to an integrated coastal defense development based on the experience and best practices of renowned water experts such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium and Singapore.

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Manila Bay... From B7

"Already, PRA has completed a Coastal Defense Master Plan for Tacloban and Palo, Leyte, in partnership with the Dutch government. PRA will soon embark on replicating similar studies in other vulnerable coastlines of the Philippine archipelago," the PRA said.

Furthermore, the PRA explained that land subsidence is caused by over extraction of ground water.

"Over extraction of ground water, in turn, is a consequence of heavy pressures exerted on urban communities by increasing population and increased economic activities such as basement excavations of large buildings," the PRA said.

The PRA is not aware of any study that directly correlates land subsidence in Metro Manila with the reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

At any rate, the PRA said, reclamation requires project proponents to prepare and submit 'flooding and flushing studies' by hydrology experts as part of the agency's pre-construction and detailed engineering studies before approving any reclamation project.

"The PRA requires the engineering design of the reclamation to provide for adequate channels, drainage and runoff discharge to the open sea, as well as non-blockage of river outfalls and other flood paths," it also said.

On the issue of storm surges, the PRA said if the reclaimed areas are designed and built higher than the highest recorded waves in Manila Bay (and these are done through sophisticated modelling methods by local and international engineering experts), they will serve as effective barriers and protection of the inland from coastal flooding.

This, the PRA said, was highlighted during the August 2012 Habagat where waves breached the seawall along the open portion of the stretch of Roxas Boulevard from the Manila Yacht Club down to T.M. Kalaw and the area experienced flooding from the surge.

On the other hand, the PRA said, the areas from the Cultural Center of the Philippines all the way up to the Coastal Road in Las Piñas did not suffer severe flooding since the reclaimed areas with their seawalls and wave deflectors effectively blocked the waves.

In all, the PRA said the Environmental Impact Assessment process addresses the effects of reclamation projects on the environment.

"An external review committee, separate from the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and composed of experts in various fields, reviews and evaluates the Environmental Impact studies prepared by reclamation proponents," the PRA said.

The Environmental Clearance Certificate to be issued by the DENR is also part of the mandatory documents that must be submitted to PRA so that it can evaluate the reclamation project proposal and recommend its approval, the PRA added.



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A POINT OF AWARENESS

PRECIOSA S. SOLIVEN

Manila Bay with the global overview of seawater

Both my Phil-STAR colleagues, Sara Soliven de Guzman and Marichu Villanueva, provided in their columns a very clear picture of our gross negligence in preventing the Manila Bay crisis in spite of the 2008 and 2011 orders of the Supreme Court to rehabilitate it within 10 years. Sara noted: "Manila Bay area covers 8 provinces and 178 local governments in the National Capital Region (NCR), Central Luzon, and CALABARZON. You can just imagine the amount of filth that flows from 17 principal rivers draining into it. Added to this is the non-existent sewerage system."



Marichu meantime cites the protagonists in the Administrative Order OA 16 Task Force created by President Duterte: Manila City administrator Atty. Erickson Alcovendaz, Jennifer Rufo of Maynilad Water Services, and Jeric Sevilla of the Manila Water Company.

Sewer treatment and relocation of informal settlers

Marichu wrote that the directives of the Task Force to enforce the country's sanitation code "to ensure the complete rehabilitation, restoration, and conservation of the Manila Bay" requires all structures and facilities around Manila Bay, including households, "to immediately connect existing sewage lines to available sewerage treatment plants (STPs)..."

Marichu added that DENR Secretary Cimatu says only 15 percent of the water-served population in the NCR is connected to a sewer system with either the Maynilad Water or the Manila Water. But both

cannot accept responsibility for the wastewater of the commercial establishments by Manila Bay (Max's Restaurant, Heng Feng Kitchenette, Jollibee in Macapagal, Lamer Catering, and Nihon Bashitei Japanese Food) because the concessionaires' mandate is for domestic waste only – but their emissions contain chemical effluents. Under their respective contracts with the Manila Waterways and Sewerage System (MWSS), the two concessionaires agreed to operate, maintain, and invest in the water and sewage system. Rufo cited Maynilad's latest investment – the construction of a P1.2 billion STP in Paranaque City that was inaugurated last month. In their other serviced areas where there are no available lands, she disclosed, Maynilad set up modular-sized STP like those in certain places in Quezon City. Moreover 200,000 informal settler families (ISF) residing along *esteros* and riverbanks discharge human waste at the waterways, which eventually ends up at the Manila Bay. The Task Force is mandated to craft a comprehensive plan for "massive relocation" of the ISF.

If the ocean gets ill, we will too

In the 2003 World Water Development Report, 23 United Nations agencies combined their efforts and expertise to offer a global overview of the state of the world's freshwater resourc-

es. Although water is the most widely occurring substance on earth, only 2.53 percent is freshwater while the remainder is saltwater. Thus, we need to protect not only our freshwater but also our source of saltwater. I quote Claire Merleau-Ponty and Sylvie Girardet on "The Seawater" chapter from their book *My Beloved Planet*,

"The five oceans: the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Indian, the Arctic, and the Antarctic, as well as the many smaller seas are salted. They are shaken by slow ocean movements. They brim over with

algae, seaweeds and invisible animals – the phytoplankton. Microscopic beings are eaten up by thousands of plants and sea animals: fish, shellfish, crustacean, mollusk and mammals (whales, seals, etc.) that feed us. Seas and oceans are full of mineral salts and vitamins that keep man healthy.

"Seas and oceans that are so valuable for life on earth are constantly mistreated by men due to pollution and the destruction of the coasts and the butchery of sea animals. We do not realize that if the ocean gets ill, we will too. When we use the seas and oceans as rubbish bins we either kill these animals or make them ill. Since we also take the creatures from the sea to feed ourselves, we may get ill as well. By fish-



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ing uncontrollably, many species of crustaceans, fish, and mammals are in danger of disappearing or extinction. The coastline is in danger too. Many people in the world live on the coastline where tourist resorts thrive. However, they destroy the coast, kill the animals living there, get the seawater dirty, and destroy the landscape."

Humanity's rubbish bin

Since the seas and the rivers are humanity's rubbish bins, no matter how large they are they will get dirty in the long run. Wastewater, waste chemicals, and factory waste products poison plants and animals living there. We may get ill because we eat them. When the water is too dirty, green weeds multiply and prevent other creatures from developing. This is known as the green tide.

In Minamata, Japan, over 1,000 fishermen fell seriously ill because they fed themselves with fish poisoned by the waste chemicals belched out into the sea from a factory nearby. Meantime in Hong Kong, it is frequently forbidden to bathe in the sea because of the danger of abundant microscopic weeds produced by pollution. These seaweeds and algae are called red tide. (Most of the coastline of Luzon has been plagued by the red tide.) The most serious dangers however are oil slicks. Other transformations are the result of men's construction work, as well as the destruction of salt, marshes, and dunes.

Massacre at sea

Ecologists are anxious. Wrongful fishing practices are killing such an amount of fish that they have no time to reproduce. Some fishing ships are real factories. Once the fish are on board, they are cleaned, chopped, canned or frozen. Trawlers, trying to guarantee a good catch (sometimes 1,000 tons per day), use huge trawl nets that are several miles long. They yank off marine plants and catch all sorts of fish, whether big or small, and not always edible. Sometimes fishermen even explode dynamite at the bottom of the sea to get an easy catch. Hundreds of pounds of fish are killed only to catch a couple of pounds' weight of prawns. Dolphins and sea lions are even massacred this way!

In the name of the law

It is everybody's duty to stop the pollution of seas and oceans! Many countries try to agree and pass laws concerning pollution. Presently, it is forbidden to dump industrial waste in almost all the seas in the world. On the other hand, oceans are less protected. Although factories do not have the right to dump carcinogenic products (cancer causing products), large amounts of plastic, iron, concrete, etc. are being thrown into the oceans and seas.

(for feedback email to precious.soliven@yahoo.com)



ATI supports Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts

LISTED Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI), operator of international gateway port Manila South Harbor, expressed readiness to support multisectoral efforts, led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to bring Manila Bay back to its glory days.

“Protecting the sea is of paramount importance to ATI. Ensuring the sustainability of Manila Bay, a major livelihood source for the community and a vital trade waterway for the country, is key to a vibrant economy,” ATI executive vice president William Khoury, said.

“We are ready to support government in this gargantuan effort, on top of initiatives we have already institutionalized in our own private capacity for the bay’s preservation,” he added.

As part of its comprehensive Environ-

ment Management System, ATI has long been using two wastewater treatment facilities, including oil and water separators, to cure effluents generated during cleaning of port equipment and facilities. Treated water are then reused for other purposes. A third wastewater treatment facility is set to be completed within the year.

In 2017, ATI invested in its own inflatable oil spill boom system, ready for deployment in case of a maritime spill. The port’s Emergency Response Team is on-duty 24/7 to immediately contain spills, while an accredited third-party responder in on-call should incidents so require.

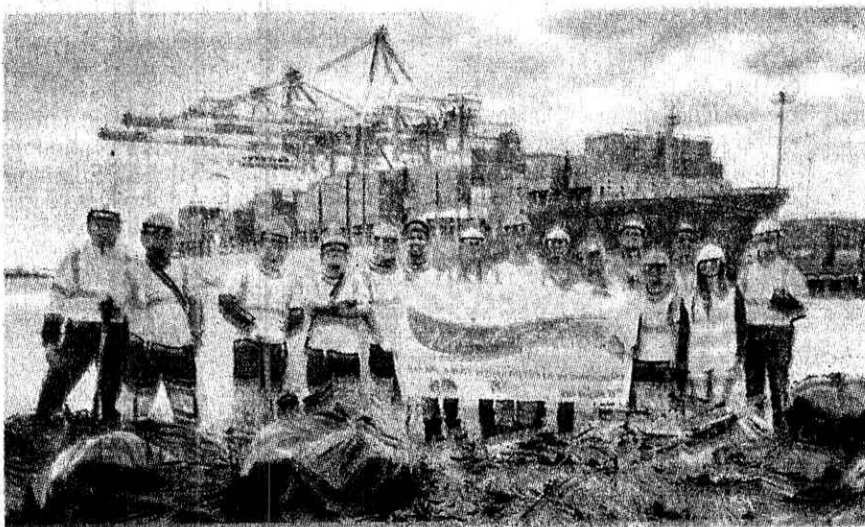
ATI’s other infrastructure and initiatives include the provision of emergency shut-off valves at the terminal drains, partnership with Bantay Kalikasan (Nature Watch) for recycling and disposal of used vehicle bat-

teries and tapping of solid waste haulers accredited by the DENR.

The port company also uses its own resources in regularly clearing flotsam washed along the port’s shores, while sending hundreds of employee volunteers to coastal clean-up drives.

“We are working closely with DENR, port authorities and stakeholders to extend ATI’s assistance in this undertaking which will benefit present and future generations,” Khoury said.

ATI is the first international port operator in the Philippines to secure an ISO 45001:2018 certification for occupational health and safety. Its is also certified for global standards on Environment Management (ISO 14001:2005), Quality Management (ISO 9001:2015) and Supply Chain Security Management (ISO 28000:2007).



ATI employee volunteers take part in DENR’s “Manila Bay-anihan” Program kick-off on Sunday, a multisectoral campaign to resuscitate the Manila Bay.



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SA puspasang pagsusulong ng proyektong linisin ang Manila Bay sa kahabaan ng Roxas Boulevard, itinuring na itong beach resort ng mga residente sa Baseco Compound sa Port Area, Maynila. **(MANNY MARCELO)**



El Nido, Panglao LGUs face punitive actions if rehab not implemented—DOT, DILG chiefs

By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

THREE months after a government task force visited the resort destinations of Panglao, Bohol and El Nido, Palawan, violations of environmental laws and easement regulations continue.

This developed as Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat said the task force will soon be rehabilitating Siargao Island in Surigao del Norte and “also looking at Coron” in Palawan.

After a visit last November, the task force, composed of the secretaries of the Departments of Tourism (DOT), Environment and Natural Resources, and the Interior and Local Government (DILG), gave the mayors of Panglao and El Nido six months to address violations on environmental laws and other government regulations. The deadline falls in May 2019.

In a recent news conference, the DOT chief and Interior Secretary Eduardo M. Año both issued warnings on possible punitive actions if said violations are not addressed.

“We gave them six months [to comply with easement and environmental regulations]. If they don’t comply, we will discuss the next steps [to implement],” said Romulo Puyat in the news conference. “But we hope the mayors of Panglao and El Nido start complying—why will they wait until the end of six months [to comply]. *Pero matigas ang ulo din* [They are very hardheaded]. They shouldn’t wait for what should happen. We hope they cooperate.”

She praised the private-sector stakeholders in both destinations “for complying on their own. We hope both mayors of Panglao and El Nido listen.” The mayor of El Nido is Nieves Cabunalda-Rosento, while the mayor of Panglao is Leonila Montero.

For his part, Año said the task force already has “an agreement with the local chief executives of El Nido and Panglao on what to do. In fact, that is one of the agreements, no closure [of their destinations], but they will start and initiate all the rehabilitation. [Both local destinations] have numerous violations on easement [and have] high coliform levels. After six months,

[violations are not addressed], appropriate actions will ensue.”

Both Cabinet secretaries also updated reporters on the ongoing rehabilitation of Boracay. “The first phase is completed. The DPWH [Department of Public Works and Highways] is now actually about to finish the [road] repairs there before embarking on the next phase, which is cementing and repairing the road going to the timberland,” said Año.

Asked by the BUSINESSMIRROR to comment on reports from the island that no construction work is being done on the main road and drainage system, Romulo Puyat, said: “The last time we spoke to Secretary Mark [Villar of the DPWH], he’s on track with his projects. By the end of March, all main roads will be fixed already. As for the drainage system, our goal [for completion] is December 2019. So we’re on track.”

The Boracay Interagency Task Force is set to meet on February 28, and Año said among the issues to be discussed are “feedback and reports of violations in certain areas.” “We will look into those reports. We will sustain gains we made in the last nine months,” he stressed.



House to file charges vs firm on hazardous trash from Korea

By Maricel V. Cruz

A JOINT committee in the House of Representatives will most likely recommend the filing of charges against persons responsible for the illegal entry and dumping of hazardous plastic garbage from South Korea in the PHIVIDEC Industrial Estate in Tagaloan, Misamis Oriental.

The House Committees on Good Government and Public Accountability, on Ecology, and on Local Government, chaired by Representatives Xavier Jesus Romualdo of Camiguin, Dakila Carlo Cua of Quirino, and Pedro Acharon Jr. of South Cotabato, respectively, has started the joint hearing on the dumping of hazardous waste pursuant to House Resolution 2317, authored by Rep. Juliette Uy of Misamis Oriental.

HR 2317 called for an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the illegal entry and dumping of hazardous plastic garbage from South Korea in the PHIVIDEC Industrial Estate in Tagaloan, Misamis Oriental.

The same incident was the subject of the privileged speech of Rep. Frederick Siao of Iligan City, who revealed that 51 container vans of garbage from South Korea were unloaded at the Port of Tagaloan.

Rep. Henry Oaminal of Misamis Occidental for the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability and Rep. Luis Ferrer IV of Cavite for the Committee on Local Government presided over the hearing.

In his opening remarks, Oaminal said the investigation will determine whether laws were violated in the subject importation of hazardous and toxic materials in the Philippine ports.

Oaminal added that the hearing will determine the guilt of public officials and employees in several government agencies that had a hand in the importation of the hazardous waster. "They may be guilty of malfeasance, misfeasance and nonfeasance in the performance of their public duties," he said.

Uy, in her opening statement, said "a plastic recycling facility of a corporate body known as Verde Soko Philippines Industrial Corporation imported in advance over 2,613 bags weighing 5,176.91 metric tons ostensibly for recycling purposes and which were declared as synthetic plastic flakes."

Uy said the importation by Verde Soko Philippines, a locator in the Phividec Industrial Estate in Misamis Oriental later turned out to contain hazardous and toxic substances with toxicity level of less than 1 percent or 0.06 percent to be exact as found out by the Environmental Management Bureau.

She said that from July 21, 2018 to Aug. 5, 2018, these hazardous and toxic materials were unloaded in the Phividec private port inside the premises that is controlled by the Phividec Industrial Authority headed in this area by Administrator Franklin Quijano.

Uy said the importation was found to have been deliberately misdeclared and supported by falsified documents from the country of origin and that they are nor recyclable.



Raps vs firms, individuals behind South Korea garbage mess pressed

THREE House committees have proposed the filing of charges against those responsible in the illegal entry and dumping of hazardous plastic garbage from South Korea.

During a hearing on Tuesday, the House Committees on Good Government and Public Accountability; on Ecology; and Local Government made the recommendation following a joint hearing on the basis of House Resolution 2317 calling for an investigation on the illegal entry and dumping of hazardous plastic garbage from South Korea at the Phividec Industrial Estate in Tagaloan, Misamis Oriental.

Noting that a criminal case had already been filed by the National Bureau of Investigation against the “purported plastics recycler” Verde Soko Philippines, Rep. Juliette T. Uy of Misamis Oriental, author of the resolution, said she would not be surprised if the NBI would either amend the charges or file new ones to include officials of the Bureau of Customs and the Phividec.

Uy said it should be basic competency of any Customs officer to know the difference between fake and real import documents. She also asked the Commission on Audit to conduct a special audit on Phividec.

For his part, Rep. Carlos Isagani Zárate echoed the recommendation to file cases against officials of Verde Soko. “This is not the first time that this issue is brought to Congress—Canadian basura, Japan basura, South Korean basura—here we are again talking about this,” he said. *Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz*



Plastic ingested by deepest ocean dwellers

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PARIS—Animals living in the deepest ocean trenches have been found with plastic fragments in their gut, according to new research published on Wednesday showing how man-made pollution reaches into the bowels of the planet.

More than 300 million tons of plastics are produced annually, and there are at least 5 trillion plastic pieces floating in our oceans.

Because deep-sea exploration is expensive and time-consuming, most studies on plastic pollution up until now had been close to the surface, showing a widespread level of plastic contamination in fish, turtles, whales and sea birds.

Now, a British team of researchers say they have discovered cases of plastic ingestion among tiny shrimp in six of the world's deepest ocean trenches.

In the Mariana Trench east of the Philippines, the deepest depression on Earth, 100 percent of the animals studied had plastic fibers in their digestive tracts.

"Half of me was expecting to find something, but that is huge," said Alan Jamieson, from

Newcastle University's School of Natural and Environmental Sciences.

6-11 km underwater

Jamieson and his team normally spend their time looking for new species in the depths of the ocean.

But they realized that during the course of expeditions dating back a decade, they had accumulated dozens of specimens of a species of tiny shrimp that lives between 6,000 and 11,000 meters beneath the surface.

They decided to look for plastic.

"We are sitting on the deepest dataset in the world, so if we find (plastics) in these, we are done," Jamieson told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

The team was astonished by just how widespread the plastic contamination at extreme depths proved to be.

For instance, the Peru-Chile Trench in the southeast Pacific is around 15,000 kilometers from the Japan Trench. Yet plastic was found in both.

"It's off Japan, off New Zealand, off Peru, and each trench is phenomenally deep,"

Jamieson said.

'It's everywhere'

"The salient point is that they are consistently found in animals all around the Pacific at extraordinary depths, so let's not waste time. It's everywhere."

Of the 90 individual creatures the team dissected, 65, or

over 72 percent, contained at least one plastic microparticle.

The study, published in the journal Royal Society Open Science, said it was unclear if the particles had been ingested by fish at higher depths which then died and sank.

But when the team analyzed the fibers—most of which ap-

peared to be clothes fabrics such as nylon—they found that the plastics' atomic bonds had shifted compared to brand-new material, suggesting they were several years old.

Microplastic particles

Microplastic particles are either dumped directly into the



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seas via sewers and rivers or formed when larger chunks of plastic break down over time.

Once they start gathering bacteria, they get heavier and eventually sink.

"So even if not a single fiber were to enter the sea from this point forward, everything that's in the sea now is going to eventually sink, and once it's in the deep sea, where is the mechanism to get it back?" asked Jamieson.

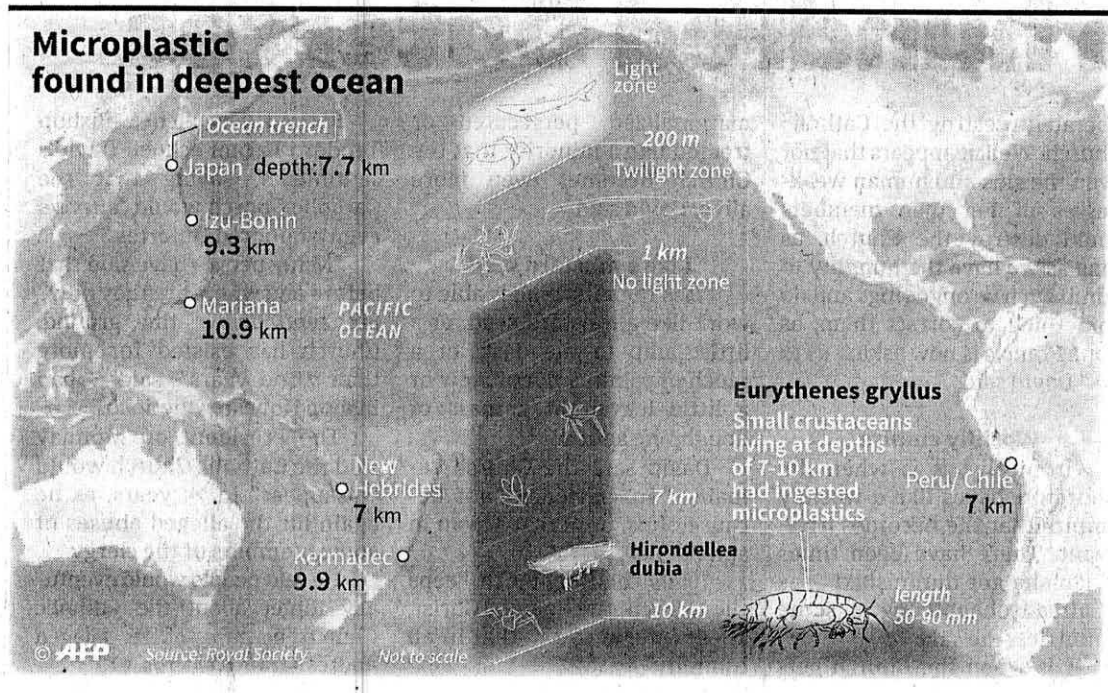
"We are piling all our crap into the place we know least about."

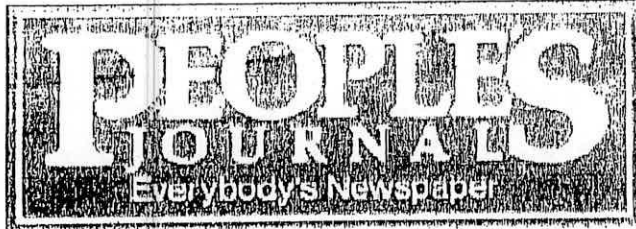
Because plastic contamination is now so widespread, even at extreme depths, the team cautioned that it was nearly impossible to know what effect plastic ingestion was having on bottom-dwelling species.

"These particles could just pass straight through the animal, but in the animals we looked at, they must be blocking them. The equivalent would be for you to swallow a 2-meter polypropylene rope and expect that not to have an adverse affect on your health," Jamieson said.

"There's no good aspect to this." —AFP

Microplastic found in deepest ocean





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Creatures in PH, other deep seas ingest plastics

By Patrick Galey

PARIS -- Animals living in the deepest ocean trenches have been found with plastic fragments in their gut, according to new research published Wednesday showing how manmade pollution reaches into the bowels of the planet.

More than 300 million tons of plastics are produced annually, and there are at least five trillion plastic pieces floating in our oceans.

Because deep-sea exploration is expensive and time-consuming, most studies on plastic pollution up until now had been close to the surface, showing a widespread level of plastic contamination in fish, turtles, whales and sea birds.

Now a British team of researchers say they have discovered cases of plastic ingestion among tiny

shrimp in six of the world's deepest ocean trenches.

In the Mariana Trench east of the Philippines, the deepest depression on Earth, 100 percent of the animals studied had plastic fibers in their digestive tracts.

"Half of me was expecting to find something but that is huge," said Alan Jamieson, from Newcastle University's School of Natural and Environmental Sciences.

Jamieson and his team normally spend their time looking for new species in the depths of the ocean.

But they realized that during the course of expeditions dating back a decade they had accumulated dozens of specimens of a species of tiny shrimp that lives between 6000-11,000 meters (19,500-36,000 feet) beneath the surface.

They decided to look for plastic.

"We are sitting on the

deepest dataset in the world, so if we find (plastics) in these, we are done," Jamieson told AFP.

The team was astonished by just how widespread the plastic contamination at extreme depths proved to be.

For instance, the Peru-Chile Trench in the southeast Pacific is around 15,000 kilometres (9,300 miles) from the Japan Trench. Yet plastic was found in both.

"It's off Japan, off New Zealand, off Peru, and each trench is phenomenally deep," Jamieson said.

"The salient point is that they are consistently found in animals all around the Pacific at extraordinary depths so let's not waste time. It's everywhere."

Of the 90 individual creatures the team dissected, 65 — over 72 percent — contained at least one plastic microparticle.



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GREEN IS IN!



Banning single-use plastic straws & stirrers

Sodexo On-site Services Philippines, Inc., from the French multinational Sodexo, has banned the purchase and usage of all single-use plastic straws and stirrers for all of its client sites since August 2018.

This effort is part of the Sodexo's advocacy in championing sustainable resource usage for its clients and relevant stakeholders in the Philippines. Beyond this, it has also committed to phase out other single-use plastic products, such as take-away plastic bags, wraps, and cutleries by 2020. The company is also currently working on expanding its

offerings for eco-friendly and reusable packaging options. Select client sites have already started offering recyclable and more sustainable alternatives since September, like wooden stirrers and bamboo straws.



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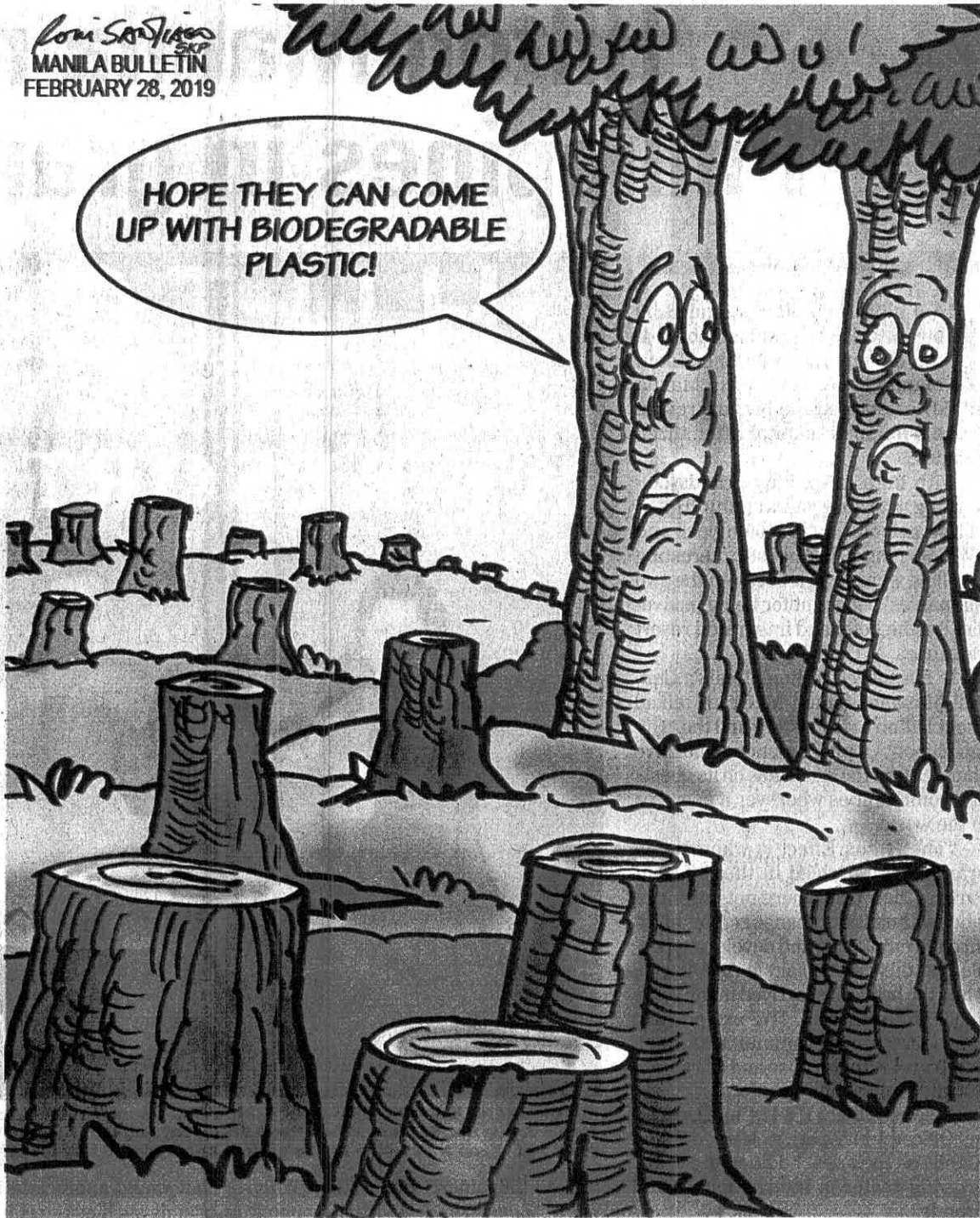
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Roni Santiago
SKP
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Related problems of trees, plastics, and pollution

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ENVIRONMENTAL groups Stand.earth and Natural Resources Defense Council came out last week with a report that Americans use more toilet paper than any other nation today. The paper is made from wood pulp, mostly produced by logging companies in old forests in Canada. Logging companies there are cutting down more than 405,000 hectares of trees every year.

Much earlier, in September, 2017, another environmental group, Greenpeace, reported that China, Indonesia, and the Philippines are the world's three worst plastic polluters of the world's oceans. They are the foremost consumers of products like softdrinks straws, bottlecaps and labels, instant coffee sachets, and grocery bags. Three US companies were named as the world's foremost producers of products packed in cheap, disposable plastic.

These two reports may seem unrelated at first glance. But they are intimately related to each other. They are two faces of the same problem of worldwide pollution, in relation to fast-disappearing natural resources and worsening climate change.

In the ongoing campaign to cut down on the use of single-use plastics such as straws, the proposed alternative is to use wooden stirrers. Instead of plastic bags, paper and cardboard boxes. Instead of plastic walls for buildings, wooden panels.

This would cut down on the use of plastics and, consequently, the plastic pollution in the world's oceans.

But it would also mean more trees would need to be cut down to produce the wooden softdrinks stirrers, paper bags, cardboard boxes, and wooden walls for buildings – more trees than the thousands now being destroyed by loggers in Canada.

Plastics, which are made mostly from oil and other minerals in the earth, have been an excellent substitute for wood and paper products but the problem is that they are not biodegradable. They do not rot, they do not dissolve, they do not return to the earth like paper and other products made from trees. After they have been used they are dumped in landfills, there to remain for hundreds of years. Worse, they are swept out to sea where they are often consumed by ocean creatures mistaking them for food and shortly afterwards dying from them in their stomachs.

One solution, as some scientists see it, is to come up with plastics that are biodegradable. They could then quickly return to earth after their use, to become basic building blocks for trees and other natural resources. There could be other ways to make plastics less of a threat to the environment so we can continue to use them, to meet the needs of the world's fast-growing population, saving our trees from being cut down to make products the world needs, like toilet paper.



EDITORIAL

Related problems of trees, plastics, and pollution

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EDITORIAL

Magkakaugnay na problema ng mga puno, plastic, at polusyon

INILABAS nitong nakaraang linggo ng environmental group na Stand.earth at Natural Resources Defense Council ang ulat na higit na marami ang nagagamit na toilet paper ng mga Amerikano kumpara sa alin mang bansa sa kasalukuyan. Ang papel ay gawa sa sepal ng kahoy, na karamihan ay ginagawa ng mga nagtotrosong kumpanya sa lumang kagubatan sa Canada. Ang mga kumpanyang nagtotroso rito ay nagpuputol ng higit 405,000 ektaryang puno kada taon.

Una rito, noong Setyembre 2017, iniulat ng isa pang environmental group, ang Greenpeace, na ang China, Indonesia at Pilipinas ang nangungunang "worst plastic polluters" sa karagatan ng buong mundo. Ang mga ito ang nangungunang consumer ng mga produktong katulad ng straw ng softdrinks, bottle caps at labels, pakete ng instant coffee at mga grocery bags. Habang ang tatlong kumpanya ng Amerika ang kinilalang nangungunang producer ng mga produktong nakabalot sa mura, at itinatapong plastik sa buong mundo.

Sa unang tingin, 'tila hindi magkakaugnay ang dalawang ulat na ito. Ngunit ang mga ito ay may malalim na ugnayan sa isa't isa. Ang mga ito ay dalawang mukha ng iisang problema sa pandaigdigang polusyon, na may kaugnayan sa mabilis na pagkawala ng mga likas na yaman at paglala ng climate change.

Sa nagpapatuloy na kampanya upang bawasan ang paggamit ng mga single-use plastics tulad ng straws, iminumungkahi ang alternatibong paggamit ng mga wooden stirrers. Sa halip na plastic bag, papel at mga cardboard na kahon ang gamitin. Sa halip na mga plastic na pader para sa mga gusali, wooden panels ang gamitin. Mapapababa nito ang paggamit ng plastik at kasunod nito, ang polusyon sa plastik sa mga karagatan ng mundo.

Ngunit mangangahulugan din ito na mas maraming puno ang kakailanganing putulin upang gumawa ng mga wooden stirrers, paper bag, cardboard boxes, at mga kahoy na pader para sa mga gusali – mas maraming puno kumpara sa libu-libong ngayon ay pinuputol ng mga nagtotroso sa Canada.

Naging mahusay na pampalit ang plastik, na karamihan ay gawa sa langis at iba pang mineral sa lupa para sa kahoy at produktong papel ngunit ang problema ay hindi ito biodegradable. Hindi ito nabubulok, natutunaw, o hindi bumabalik sa lupa katulad ng papel at iba pang produkto na gawa sa puno. Matapos gamitin ang mga ito ay natatambak lamang sa mga landfills, na doon mananatili ng daang libong taon. Pinakamalala, napapadpad ang mga ito sa dagat kung saan kalimitang nakakain ng mga lamang-dagat sa pag-aakalang pagkain ang mga ito at kalaunan ay mamamatay dulot ng mga nabarang plastik sa kanilang mga tiyan.

Isa sa mga solusyon na nakita ng mga siyentista ay ang paglikha ng plastik na biodegradable. Na maaaring bumalik sa lupa matapos gamitin, upang maging pangunahing sangkap para sa mga puno at iba pang likas na yaman. Maaaring may iba pang paraan upang mabawasan ang panganib na maaaring idulot ng plastik sa kapaligiran nang patuloy natin itong magamit, upang mapunan ang pangangailangan ng mabilis na lumalagong populasyon ng mundo, na magsasalba sa ating mga puno mula sa pagputol dito upang gawing produkto na kailangan ng mundo, tulad ng toilet paper.



DENR USEC. ANTIPORDA SA MOVIE WRITERS: TULONG PARA SA MALINIS NA PALIGID



NI JOEY SARMIENTO

TALKING about passion and a heart in downright cleaning all of the dreaded and polluted rivers, lakes and beaches in the country, then it is all about DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda.

Of late, Usec. Benny, a former president of National Press Club (NPC), publisher of a national tabloid Remate and a friend to every media person, gathered the Philippine Movie Press Club (PMPC) to talk about supporting his advocacy in cleaning our country, if not the whole universe (no pun intended).

"I am asking for your support dahil kailangan ko ang bawat isa to promote my advocacy, which is to free our country from trash and pollution," initiated Usec. Benny.

Yes, it might sound impossible, but we can try.

"Sinimulan natin 'yan sa Boracay. Ang sabi nila, e, imposible raw na malinis natin ang Boracay. Ang dami nilang issues na binato. Sinabi pa nila na baka pagtayaran lang daw 'yon ng casino kaya natin nililinis ang Boracay.

"Pero ngayon, may naitayo bang casino? Hindi ba't nalinis naman natin at nailagay sa ayos ngayon ang Boracay, which is one of the premiere tourist destinations sa ating bansa?"

"Sabi nila noon, e, imposible raw na malinis at mailagay natin sa ayos ang Boracay but we've done it. With the support of our President, Rodrigo Duterte, e, nagawa natin ang sinasabi nilang imposible," Usec. Benny explained.

He's right. Cleaning a polluted and cruddy Boracay is actually possible. All we need is the will and heart to do it and, we are all set.

"Now, our project is 'yung Manila Bay. Sinimulan na naming linisin ang Manila Bay. And we are happy dahil sa influence na naibigay namin sa mga kababayan natin dahil kahit sila, e, nagkaroon ng kusa para linisin ang Manila Bay," he said.

At this moment, Usec. Benny reminded us that all we need is discipline. Cleaning the whole country will start from our own backyard.

"Kailangan, e, meron tayong disiplina at hindi natin dapat tinatapon ang ating mga basura sa kung saan-saan. At kapag nagkaroon na tayo ng disiplina, e, walang imposible at siguradong mailinis natin ang ating bayan at magiging magandang example tayo sa buong mundo."

Usec. Benny asked the members of PMPC and the whole entertainment industry to help and make a proposal to support his advocacy in cleaning our environment.

"My office is open anytime para sa inyo. Just give me a proposal kung paano kayo makatutulong sa ating advocacy and rest assured na kung maganda ang inyong proposal, you are going to have my full support," Usec. Benny concluded.

May your tribe increase, Sir Benny.



JOEY & SIR BENNY



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BURGOS WIND FARM TUMUTULONG SA KOMUNIDAD SA PAG-RECYCLE NG BASURA

LAOAG CITY – NAG-SIMULA nang gamitin ng host communities ang pinakamalaking wind power farm sa Burgos, Ilocos Norte para maka-

pag-recycle ng basura at magamit ito ng tama sa pamamagitan ng tamang pamamahala at patuloy na pagsasanay.

Sa pamamagitan din

ng Energy Development Corporation's (EDC) corporate social responsibility program, ilang villagers ng Burgos town lalo na sa Barangays Po-

blacion, Nagsurot at Saoit ang aktibong nakatutok sa implementasyon ng 10 taong integrated solid waste management plan na ginagawang kapaki-

pakinabang ang basura sa komunidad.

Sa isang panayam, sinabi ng EDC's CSR program head na si Deborah Melchor, isinagawa ang ecobricks workshop noong February 22 sa Burgos town sa pamamagitan ng Green Innovations at Conservation Specialists, Inc. (GICS) na inilunsad ng Burgos wind farm para palakasin ang lokal na komunidad tungkol sa waste management.

Naturuan ang villagers ng hands-on training kung paano gumawa ng bricks mula sa recycled plastic wastes.

Tulad sa ibang bahagi ng bansa, sinabi ni Melchor na ang problema sa basura ay isa nang pangunahing alalahanin sa bayan ng Burgos kaya, nagdesisyon ang kompanya na tumulong sa local



government units (LGUs) na sumunod sa probisyon ng Republic Act 9003, o ang tinatawag na Ecological Solid Waste Management law.

Sa ngayon, mahigpit na itong mino-monitor ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Ang hindi pagsunod sa kautusan ay mangangahulugan ng administrative case laban sa LGU.

Bilang benepisyaryo ng proyekto, sinabi ng Poblacion village chief na si Joegje Jimenez nagpapasalamat sila sa pagkakaroon ng EDC bilang kanilang main sponsor sa pagpapatupad ng aktibidades tungkol sa solid waste management.

"It takes a lot of patience, hard work and sacrifice to do it but the price is rewarding," ani

Jimenez, sabay bigay-diin sa ilan nilang waste recycling products na naka-exhibit sa village hall ay binibili at ino-order ng mga balikbayan at ilang mga bisita.

Sa ngayon, ang Poblacion village sa ilalim ng pagbabantay ni Jimenez ay isang modelong barangay pagdating sa waste management.

Sa katunayan, ibinahagi rin ni Jimenez ang best practices ng village sa Liga Congress na ginanap sa Baguio City noong nakaraang linggo. Ito ay dinaluhan ng 745 opisyal ng barangay mula sa Ilocos Norte.

Bukod sa ecobricks making, aktibo rin ang EDC sa massive information and education campaign na nakatutok sa proteksiyon at pamamahala ng kalikasan.

PNA



Environmental conservation, suportado ni Go

Binigyang-diin ni dating Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go ang kahalagahan ng pangangalaga sa kalikasan, sa kanyang pagbisita sa Amadeo at Kawit sa Cavite, kamakailan.

Sa kanyang talumpati, iginiit ni Go ang kagustuhan niyang maipagpatuloy at

paunlarin ang inisyatibong administrasyon na nakatuon sa tamang pangangalaga sa kalikasan.

"May mga hakbang naman na ginagawa ang gobyerno para mapangalagaan ang kalikasan. Ako naman po, willing po akong suportahan ang mga hakbang ng gobyerno sa pamamagitan ng dagdag pang mga programa," ani Go.



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C. Visayas rivers yield 47.8 tons of trash

By MINERVA BC NEWMAN

CEBU CITY— More than 47.8 tons of trash were gathered during the first round of the simultaneous river clean-up in Central Visayas last week.

The trash came from the Butuanon River, Luyang River, and Bulacao River, all in Cebu province; Abatan River, Inabanga River and Manaba River in Bohol; Banica River, Sicopong River and Panamang-an River, all in Negros

Oriental, and Senora River in Siquijor.

DENR Regional Executive Director Gilbert Gonzales thanked the 13,400 volunteers/ from local and national government units, private sector partners, students and other stakeholders for making the venture successful.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Community Environment and Natural Resources office (CENRO) in Talibon, Bohol, brought the biggest number of volunteers at 5,200 for cleaning the

Wahig-Inabanga River.

“DENR definitely could not have done it alone but, with all the help from our valued partners from the local government, national government agencies, private partners and all other stakeholders, we made it happen,” Gonzales said.

Aside from the series of river clean-ups, DENR will also inspect establishments along rivers to stop the illegal dumping of untreated wastewater and trash.

The Environmental Management

Bureau (EMB) in the region has almost completed its river profiling and is regularly taking water samples to keep track of the river rehabilitation efforts, Gonzales said.

Intensive Information, education and communication campaign in communities living near these rivers will be stepped up to raise awareness and promote behavior change to help restore the beauty and bounty of the rivers, Gonzales said.

EMB Environmental Education

and Information Section head E Cindylyn Pepito said the biggest contributor to river and water pollution people, especially those residing by the rivers.

“They must also claim responsibility for their wastes thrown to the river including those establishments and industries,” Pepito said.

Of the 33 rivers in the region which are located in highly populated areas need cleaned up, Pepito said.





SHOOTING STRAIGHT

BOBIT S. AVILA

Cleaning up the sea has reached Cebu

The nationwide effect of the rehabilitation of Manila Bay has now reached Cebu when the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine Coast Guard shut down the Multifarms Agro-Industrial Development Corp. (MAIDC) in San Fernando, some 30 kilometers south of Cebu City because its drainage system for its pig farm dumped its waste directly into the sea.



The order was issued against this large-scale piggery in Sitio Magtalisay, Barangay Sangat, San Fernando allegedly violating various environmental laws — RA 8550, or the Fisheries Code of the Philippines, and RA 9275, or the Clean Water Act, dumping pig waste directly into the sea. We also learned that the piggery has allegedly been operating without a permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-7) since the 1980s. Actually, whenever we go to the City of Carcar, we always pass this place which most people call Barangay “Baho” because you could smell the place even if your car is airconditioned.

After discovering that the piggery’s drainage system emptied out into the sea, the NBI 7 and the PCG 7 decided to close the establishment and asked personnel of the Department of Public Works and Highways to destroy the drainage system. The piggery has a population of around 10,000 pigs... and I’m sure that its closure would have a serious effect on Cebu’s famous lechon market. But thanks to the DENR, people have finally realized that the government is dead serious not only in the cleanup of Boracay Island or Manila Bay, but also any business polluting our seas.

Just a few days ago, a group of people cleaned up the Bulacao River in Cebu City and removed tons of garbage from the river. But as I have pointed out, the plans of Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña who was asking for volunteers to clean up the Lahug Creek or Guadalupe River... that idea is just too political for me. I mean, for as long as you do not remove the illegal settlers living along the five-meter easement on the banks of rivers or creeks, today’s clean up drive would be meaningless because the same people would still dump their waste into the river. So the volunteers would end up cleaning the waste of the day and do the same thing the next day.

What is needed for Cebu City is to create a master-plan to recover the five-meter easement from the rich and poor who built structures along the banks of the river. If these people are removed from the five-meter easement, only then can they say that finally they have cleaned up the rivers and esteros of Cebu City. Right now, getting volunteers for the clean-up job is nothing but politics, which we don’t need!



What's hot in today's business

Tourists, visitors flock to Bolinao anew after coastal cleanup campaign

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

MORE tourists and visitors have started flock in Bolinao, Pangasinan, after various stakeholders worked together to conduct coastal cleanup and rehabilitation activities on some of the town's beach resorts.

The rehabilitation was undertaken through the voluntary demolition of illegal structures near the shorelines, according to officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

It was learned that several resorts in Barangay Patar have voluntarily dismantled illegal structures built in their premises in response to the notices of violation issued by the DENR Region 1 office.

Among these resorts is the famous White Beach of Patar, which dismantled a structure built atop a natural rock formation in the area.

The coastal cleanup activities and voluntary demolition of illegal structures were also attributed to the agreement reached by various stakeholders during the Coast Watch Summit last year, and the ongoing coastal evaluation, monitoring and inventory by the DENR Region 1 Office.

DENR Region 1 Executive Director Carlito M. Tuballa was elated with the support and cooperation demonstrated by resort owners and various local government units in the whole of Pangasinan.

"It is better this way. No need for confrontation. We talked to them about their violation, and it is good that they cooperated with the agency to preserve the beauty of our beach resorts in Region 1," Tuballa said in a news statement.

The DENR Region 1 recently visited the coastal communities in Patar and found the cottages along the shorelines gone.

Benjie Sarte, president of Patar White Beach Bolinao Community Association, said since they worked hand in hand with the DENR in cleaning up the beach areas, more tourists have frequented their place.

The Community Environment and Natural Resources Office here headed by Hipolito Salatan has vowed to strictly implement environmental laws and go after violators.

A day after the cleanup, Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu dropped by to convey his appreciation and to provide further instructions related to the ongoing activity in the region.



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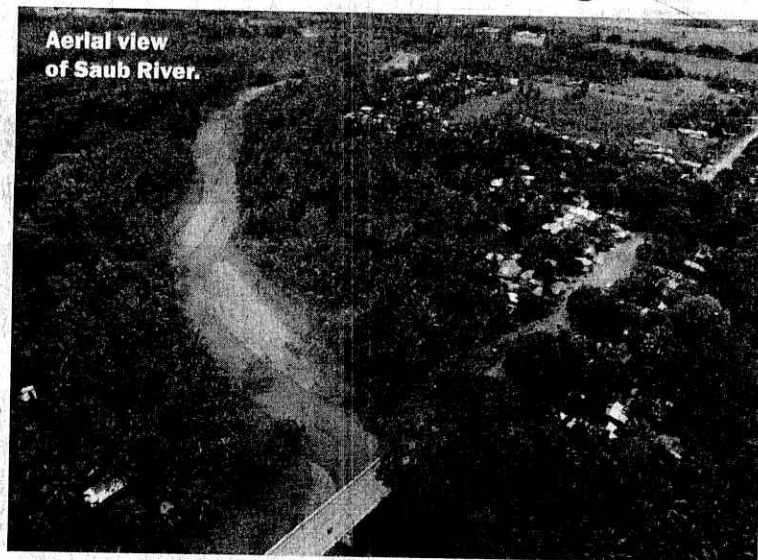
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Sarangani rolls out watershed rehab project

The provincial government of Sarangani recently rolled out a multi-million 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 watershed covers nine barangays with a total of 1,747 households living along the 100-meter riparian zone which are placed at high risk exposure to flooding and other climate hazards.

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



Aerial view
of Saub River.

toring and evaluation.

The project will develop Saub watershed ecosystem resiliency and community protection through watershed governance, build the capacities of Maitum municipal government, develop-

ment 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.



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Saub-Sarangani watershed rehab project rolls out

THE provincial government of Sarangani recently rolled out a multi-million 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 about P93.5 million from the People's Survival Fund and the P9.33 million from Sarangani.

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

According to Governor Steve Chiongbian Solon, the memorandum of agreement sets the terms and conditions for the release of the P93.5-million grant from the PSF, the national government's flagship finance climate program.

The project, which took three years before the PSF board approved it in July 2018, would improve the resilience of the 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 PSF was created by Republic Act No. 9729 or the Climate Change Act of 2009, and 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 plan so far, to be implemented in early 2019.



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Groups boost water mgmt in Cagayan

ILAGAN CITY, Isabela: To improve water resource management in Cagayan Valley (Region 2), a network of Asian river basin organizations were convened in an international training-workshop in this city with various government agencies and private sectors, including foreign partners.

The training-workshop on Integrated Water Resource Management was in collaboration with the International River Foundation (IRF), Department of Science and Technology (DoST), Department of Environment and Natural Resources, state colleges and universities (SCUs), among other stakeholders.

Eva Abal, IRF chief executive officer, said they have been collaborating with the Melbourne-based OceanaGold to help them in their commitment to restore rivers not only in Cagayan Valley but also in the country. OceanaGold operates the Didipio Gold and Copper Project in the mountain village of Didipio in Kasibu town in Nueva Vizcaya.

"Water restoration is for the future generation," Abal said adding that the IRF would support integrated river basin management for the restoration, protection and sustainable management of Cagayan Valley's rivers.

"We do this by facilitating education, recognition and collaboration," she added.

IRF said it would also be working with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) and SCUs to establish real-time information on river behavior as water is crucial for all life and people need healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands for sustainable development.

Abal said they would promote and support effective management of these resources by facilitating knowledge sharing, education and best practice river basin management, and by recognizing and rewarding those making a difference.

"We draw upon our large networks, and seek to build new ones, to revive the world's rivers through multi-sector partnerships around the world. We are committed to supporting posi-

itive ecological, economic and social outcomes through our programs, which aim to change the lives of individuals and communities," Abal added.

In his message during the training and workshop, Science Secretary Fortunato dela Peña cited the importance of water management and its sustainability for both in agriculture and human life.

"We have to utilize various researches in relation to water management because water is an important element to cities and human settlements that are sustainable, livable and safe," he said.

He said that one of the projects of the DoST in water management is capacitating SUCs that include Nueva Vizcaya State University, Quirino State University, Isabela State University and Cagayan State University.

"Capacitating these state colleges and universities is through light detection and ranging (LiDAR) technology in producing hazard maps for river basins as well as maps for landslide prone areas," dela Peña said.

He also said the DoST has been collaborating for Magat Dam's water management initiatives.

Approximately 350 kilometers north of Metro Manila, the Magat Dam is located at the boundaries of Alfonso Lista, Ifugao and Ramon, Isabela on the Magat River, a major tributary of Cagayan River. The water stored in the reservoir supplies about two months of normal energy requirements.

"Magat Dam's water management initiatives include assessment of its lifeline structure using concrete petrography and automated real-time monitoring system to ensure the integrity of the dam," dela Peña said.

Meanwhile, engineer Sancho Maborang, DoST-Cagayan Valley director, and Ricmar Aquino, Isabela State University president, assured support and collaboration with stakeholders.

"We will continue supporting our stakeholders in Region 2 for the proper management of water resources in their respective jurisdictions," Maborang said.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Strategic Communication Initiatives Service

INQUIRER



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EX-SOLON QUESTIONS ONEROUS' CHINA LOAN

STORY BY MELVIN GASCON

Terms of a P3.2-billion funding for the Chico River irrigation project are allegedly disadvantageous to the Philippines because of its high interest rate and fees, and the hiring of a Chinese contractor. **A4**

FROM A1

By Melvin Gascon
@melvingasconINQ

The Philippines has entered into an "onerous" loan agreement with China for an irrigation project in the Cordillera, former Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares said on Wednesday.

At a press briefing, Colmenares said this should compel top government officials to disclose the terms of all agreements they had entered into with the Chinese government.

"The loan agreement for the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project is onerous and highly favors China. It is a disaster for the Philippines," said Colmenares, who obtained a copy of the document from a non-government organization.

The project is covered by a 20-year loan with Export-Import Bank of China as lender and the Philippine government as borrower. Upon completion, it will supply water to around 8,700 hectares of agricultural land, benefiting 4,350 farmers and their families, and serve 21 barangays in Kalinga and Cagayan provinces in northern Luzon, according to the government.

But the terms of the funding deal highly favor China, which is guaranteed payments of high interest rates and preference for Chinese contractors, Colmenares said.

Other projects

A separate document obtained by Bayan Muna showed that aside from the Chico River project, other "first basket projects" totaling P205 billion are to be financed by China.

These include:

- Philippine National Railway South Long Haul Project worth P175.3 billion, of which P14 billion is supposedly for "consultancy services"

- New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam of the Manila Water Sewerage System (P12.2 billion)

- Davao-Samal Bridge Construction Project of the Department of Public Works and Highways (P17.9 billion)

The Chico River project was signed on April 10, 2018, by China's ambassador Zhao Jianhua, on behalf of the lender bank, and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, on behalf of the Philippine government.

Interest rate, fees

According to Colmenares, the contract for the \$62.086-million loan (P3.2 billion at current exchange rates) sets an annual interest rate at 2 percent, with an additional annual "commitment fee" of 0.3 percent of the loan and a "management fee" of 0.3 percent.

He said the 2-percent interest rate was exceedingly high



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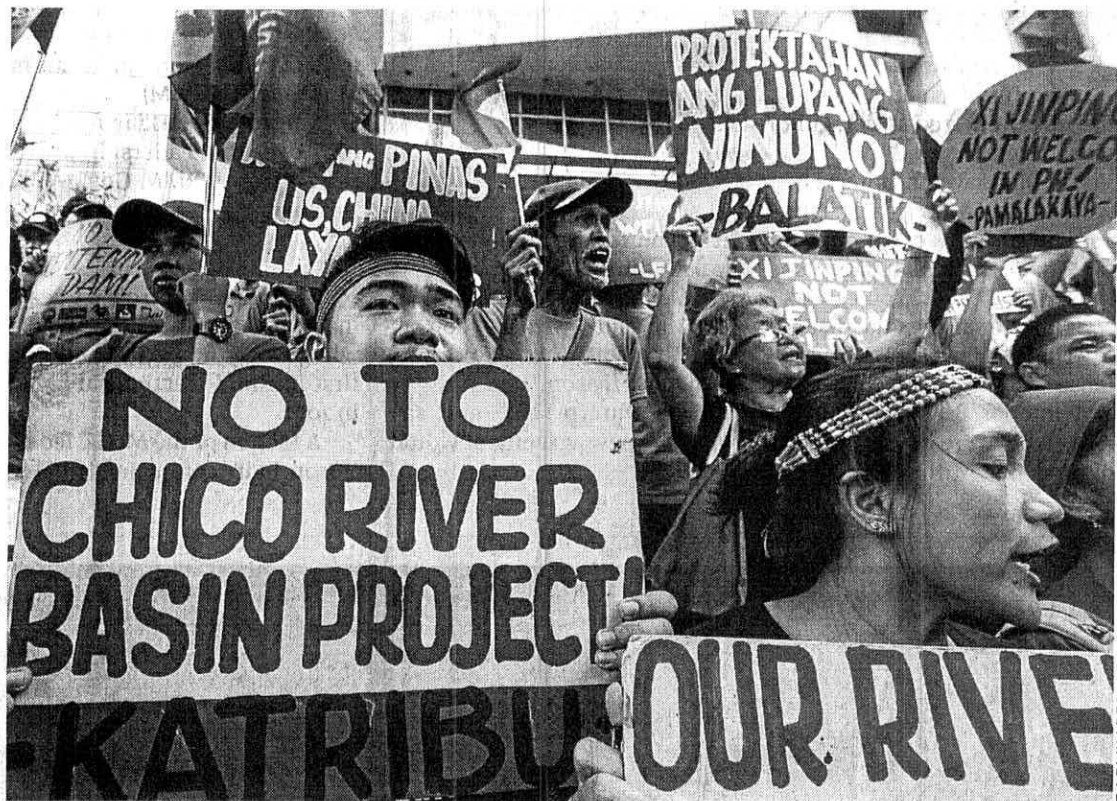
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WARY OF DEBT TRAP A protest rally in Makati City against the China-funded Chico River Pump Irrigation Project greets the arrival in Manila of Chinese President Xi Jinping in November 2018.

compared with the 0.25 percent for loans offered by other countries.

“Our children will continue paying this highly disadvantageous loan as we get enmeshed in a debt trap in the amount of hundreds of billions of dollars from China,” he said.

Automatic appropriation

The contract is also riddled with other “highly onerous”

terms, said the former party-list lawmaker.

Under the agreement, China is guaranteed to be “paid in full without counterclaim or retention,” and will not be made liable to pay any taxes or charges for the entire transaction, including any interest income it earns from the loan.

“China even dictated the content of our budget laws by demanding that payment be au-

tomatically included in the general appropriations law, practically usurping the constitutional power of Congress to solely decide the content of our yearly budget,” Colmenares said.

He said the deal also designated China CAMC Engineering Co. as contractor.

With these terms, the Chinese contractor is likely to hire Chinese nationals and displace Filipino workers,

Colmenares said.

While Philippine laws require contractors to undergo a procurement or bidding process, China simply imposed its own contractor, he said.

“We are like a province of China that it can dictate on. These kinds of agreement is humiliating to the Philippines and must be stopped,” he said.

Patrimonial property

Under a “vaguely worded” provision, the agreement will allow China to own patrimonial property in the country, according to Colmenares.

“A dangerous component of the agreement is ... Section 8.1 that does not recognize our sovereign rights in the country and could allow China to take control of our patrimonial properties should we fail to pay the loan,” he said.

“This allows China’s takeover of our patrimonial properties and resources deemed by China’s tribunal to be ‘of commercial use,’” Colmenares said.

He cited the experience of Sri Lanka, where China took over the Hambantota Port after Sri Lanka failed to pay its debt due to the delay in the opening of the port’s commercial use.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate called out the Philippine government to be transparent on the deals with China and allow public access to its “contents and other relevant documents.” INQ



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Grade 7 students lauded for raising 50K for Pasig River rehab

FOR their efforts to help in the rehabilitation of Pasig River, the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) dedicated the inaugural Asia River Prize to five Grade 7 students from the Multiple Intelligence International School along Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City.

The Asia River Prize is the highest international award for river restoration in the Asia-Pacific region.

PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio Goitia recognized the Smash Five Bros for raising more than P50,000 for the rehabilitation of the Pasig River and for serving as river warrior

role models.

The Smash Five Bros group is composed of seventh grade students Luis Teodoro Camacho, Luis Alonzo Guevarra, Chollo Javier, Enzo de Leon and Miguel Legazpi.

"We learned that Pasig River used to be a very beautiful river so we just want to help in the [rehabilitation] process," Camacho said.

Aside from hosting a Smash Bros video game tournament dubbed as "Smash that Trash," the students also raised funds by selling food and partnering with individual and corporate sponsors.

Impressed by their support to the "Puso Para Sa Ilog" advocacy, Goitia said that "if these students, at their young age, are already advocating that we must dispose our garbage properly, then adults should know better not to litter. It's that simple."

Now on its second year, Information Officer 3 Alyssa Chrizelle Miclat shared that the proceeds of last year's tournament helped the agency in funding its week-long emergency cleanup operations in Estero de Magdalena, a tributary of the Pasig River.



PASIG RIVER WARRIORS Collectively known as the Smash Five Bros, Grade 7 students Luis Teodoro Camacho, Luis Alonzo Guevarra, Chollo Javier, Enzo de Leon and Miguel Legazpi do a 'Puso Para Sa Ilog Pasig' handsign with Smash that Trash 2 winners Reese Uy, Kei Shirabe and Raja Dalisay, and Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission Information Officer 3 Alyssa Miclat at the Multiple Intelligence International School in Quezon City on February 16. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Groundbreaking on for Jalaur Dam

After being stalled for more than three decades, the P11.2-billion Jalaur River Multipurpose Project (JRMP) II in Calinog, Iloilo commenced its groundbreaking and capsule-laying ceremony on Wednesday. The dam, a flagship project of the National Irrigation Authority (NIA)-Visayas, is the first large-scale reservoir outside of Luzon. — **Emme**

Rose Santiago

>> See full story on <https://goo.gl/WHUATC>



WESTERN VISAYAS: ILOILO

MIB plant upgrades to expand water supply

As part of its rehabilitation program, the Metro Iloilo Bulk Water Supply Corporation (MIB) started the upgrade of its water treatment plant in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo on Monday to expand the water supply within the franchise areas of the Metro Iloilo Water District (MIWD). "We assure the people of Metro Iloilo that this initiative will result in greater and bigger benefits as MIB commits to provide potable water supply to more and more Ilonggo," engineer Rolixto V. Jodieres Jr., MIB chief operating officer, said. — **Emme Rose Santlagudo**

>> See full story on <https://goo.gl/Y98NYb>



People power and water crisis

COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

On Feb. 22, 1986, the Edsa Revolution started. Four days later, People Power succeeded in overcoming the dictatorship. Thirty-three years later, on Feb. 21, 2019, a different kind of people power was started. It was done by 11 top officials (mostly presidents) of 11 large federations and organizations to overcome our water crisis. But this time, it will not take three days but three years to win the major water battles.

The people power groups who converged to support the Movement for Water Security (MWS) come from various sectors, such as agriculture (e.g., Alyansa Agricultura and Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food; industry (e.g., Federation of Philippine Industries and Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry), and nongovernment organizations (e.g. women-Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Kababaihan sa Kanayunan, youth—Boy Scouts of the Philippines, and academe—Coalition For Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines).

Every person uses water. Therefore, each must participate in the battle to overcome our water crisis.

How is this done? First, we must recognize that a water crisis exists. On Feb. 21, the Movement for Water Security stated: "The private sector wishes to sound the alarm by explaining clearly that the water crisis is present globally, and more so, in the Philippines."

On the global front, the World Economic Forum has identified water as "the largest global risk in terms of potential impact on the next decade." One third of the world population lives in water-stressed areas. In 2030, water demand will outstrip supply by 40 percent. Experts say that the next big war will be on water, as is happening in Syria now.

On the domestic front, more than 50 persons die every day because of water-related diseases. Nine million have no access to safe water. Damaging floods and droughts are rampant. We have lost 5.7 million hectares of forest and 300,000 hectares of mangroves. We collect only 4 percent of rainwater, compared to India's 67 percent in certain areas.

In the 2013 and 2016 Asian Development Band water publi-

cations, we rank in the bottom third of 48 countries in water security. The problem was not water itself, but bad governance. We have 34 government water-related agencies that are not coordinated today. Thankfully, there is finally a Neda-sponsored executive order correcting this situation that is already in Malacanang. It is hoped that the President will sign this in time for World Water Day on March 22.

The private sector must also do its share. Though often done with the collusion of corrupt government officials, the illegal loggers, irresponsible miners, and unconscionable businessmen and citizens who dump harmful waste into our rivers and lakes—they come from the private sector. The MWS has identified the first of seven private sector action imperatives to address this situation: "Follow, implement, and advocate strict compliance with water-related laws." Organizations must not only police their ranks. They must also, in addition to our citizens, police their ranks and report transgressions, even anonymously, to the proper authorities. With the unprecedented political will demonstrated by President Duterte and DENR

chief Roy Cimatu in Boracay and Manila Bay, penalties will be imposed to stop the wanton abuse of our scarce water resources.

On the positive side, the private sector can continue implementing its admirable water initiatives, but with more synergy and intensity. For example, the more than four million Boy and Girl scouts can increase their well-managed tree planting programs with additional funding from corporations, while at the same time showing the best practices of growing these trees. This way, it will stop a common practice of just planting trees which just die without nurturing.

A different kind of people power is needed today to address our water crisis. Each must do his or her share, many by just carefully using everyday water. Only in this way can we substantially achieve our objective of water security three years from now. INQ



The author is Agriwatch chair, former Secretary of Presidential Programs and Projects and former undersecretary of Agriculture and Trade and Industry. Contact him via agriwatch_phil@yahoo.com



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Preserving Philippine marine life

By Rhosdel Grace Gabac

THE melting of the polar ice caps, frequent and stronger typhoons, the thinning of the ozone layer—these are just some of the telltale signs of Global warming. It is no longer a myth or a conspiracy theory, that's why more and more individuals are doing their fair share in helping stem the tide. Speaking of tides, here are some organizations dedicated to save Nemo, Dory, and other sea critters.

Save the Philippine Seas. A report on a US-based company that allegedly imported shells, corals, and other endangered marine wildlife from the Indo-Pacific region, which included the Philippines on April 9, 2011 sparked the independent movement now called the Save the Philippine Seas (SPS). Organized by concerned individuals, the group went public primarily online through the #reefwatchPH used in Twitter on May 26, 2011. According

to a speech given by SPS member Anna Oposa at the Senate investigation on coral plunder in 2011, the rape of the Philippines' rich marine resources was not just a national concern, but rather an international one because of its global significance. "We are here to help spark the political will to promote compliance. From a handful of individuals who worked together last month, our number has grown exponentially. We have created a movement called Save Philippine Seas, which is currently conducting a marine resource watch, actively lobbying and researching on the amendment of penalties, enforcement of law, and keeping citizenry aware through social media. We have received an overwhelming number of messages from Filipinos and non-Filipinos from here and abroad offering their help. The bayanihan spirit is very much alive," said Oposa. In December of last year, Globe Telecom led an awareness campaign and

partnered up with SPS and organized a marine biodiversity workshop to discuss the best practices on sustainability and biodiversity in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte, where 30 business owners and a Department of Environment and Natural Resources representative attended. "The program serves as a tool to give proper education and awareness to every household and every barangay in order to solve our solid waste management problem. I would like to appeal to the local community and all business establishments here in General Luna that we help each other and work together for the success of our environment conservation efforts, for the prosperity and progress of our own municipality," said Jose Wilbert L. Gorgonio, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer, General Luna regarding the event.

Waves For Water Founded by Jon Rose, Waves For Water (W4W) to date,

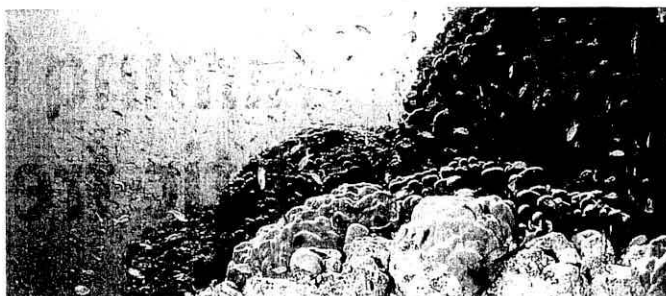
has conducted 125 projects throughout 40 countries and provided an access to clean water for roughly 8 million people across the globe by providing water source creation solutions that include well digging, well restoration, rainwater harvesting, and custom-built water filtration and purification systems for different communities. The organization has implemented more than 150,000 water filtration systems, 100 rain harvesting systems, and more than 100 wells constructed or restored as well. In the country, W4W partnered with the Land Bank of the Philippines, one of the largest banks nationally with branches in every district, to implement filtration systems for communities in need, especially in typhoon-stricken areas and for future typhoon preparedness. W4W is strongly rooted on disaster relief, starting with the devastating earthquake in Haiti where it still remains to have a strong presence. The organization's major partnerships include those forged with the United Nations, Farmers in Health, Compassion International, and Nike, which aided them in responding to every major natural disaster since 2009, including earthquakes in Japan, Nepal, and Ecuador; flooding in Pakistan, India, and Brazil; and storms in Mexico, Vanuatu, and Haiti. Currently, W4W is raising funds for various projects, which includes but is not limited to the Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Initiative, Rohingya Refugee Relief Initiative, and Tropical Storm Lidia Response Initiative.

Marine Conservation Philippines (MCP) The non-stock, non-profit organization founded in 2012 is a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) geared towards preserving and protecting coastal resources in the Philippines through education, volunteerism and research. MCP partnered up with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the

implementation of the CMEMP (Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management Plan). They also host and facilitate DENR staff training in scuba diving, monitoring methodology and statistical analysis. The organization was also involved last year in the provincial team implementing the United Nations initiative, Green Fins, alongside The Reef World Foundation and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, aiming to reduce the environmental impact of the diving industry.

Oceana Philippines The organization was established by a group of leading foundations namely, The Few Charitable Trusts, Oak Foundation, Marisa Foundation (formerly Homeland Foundation), Sandler Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The 1999 study they commissioned sparked the birth of Oceana when the results came out that less than 0.5 percent of all resources spent by environmental non-profit groups in the United States went to ocean advocacy. At that time, there was no organization working exclusively to protect and restore the oceans on a global scale and ever since, Oceana has won more than 200 victories and protected more than 4.5 million square miles of ocean by conducting specific, science-based policy campaigns with fixed deadlines and articulated goals.

During the Benham Rise 2016 Expedition, Oceana Philippines provided remotely operated vehicles and technical diver-videographers along with local marine scientists, Philippine Navy divers and the Philippine Coast Guard to discover the reef ecosystem underwater. With more Filipinos gaining awareness and concern for the vast and rich natural resources of the country, it would not take long before there is no more need for conservation. A strong typhoon can easily be blocked by a stronger dedication and deeper appreciation for the environment.





Department of Water Resources Management prayoridad ni Tolentino

BIBIGYANG-PANSIN ni environmental lawyer at PDP-Laban senatorial bet Atty. Francis Tolentino ang paglikha ng Department of Water Resources Management (DWRM) na makakatuwang ng MWSS at LWUA sa sandaling palarin siyang makapasok sa Magic 12 sa mid-term elections sa Mayo 13.

Ayon kay Tolentino ang naturang departamento ang mangunguna sa tamang pagpapatakbo, proteksiyon at conversion ng water resources sa bansa, gayundin ang magpopondo sa kinakailangan sa pagsasaliksik at pagbili ng mga kagamitan para sa treatment at recycling ng tubig.

"I read a study that by 2025, there will be widespread water crises.

That's only about six years from now. Water, like food, is essential

to both human and non-human life. If we do not make good use of the water that we have left, there will be nothing left of us.

The challenges of depleted and polluted water resources, and the global impacts of climate change, necessitate the establishment of a government agency that will concentrate efforts to mitigate the impacts of these challenges

to the life and development of our communities," ayon kay Tolentino.

Kasabay nito, pinapurihan ni Tolentino ang pagbabawas ng

San Miguel Corporation ng kanilang konsumo sa tubig noong nakalipas na 2018 at ang kanilang ipinatupad na "Water for All" sustainability project. (Juliet de Loza-Cudia/JC Cahinhinan)





MANILA WATER, BINIGYANG-PUGAY ANG MGA KATUWANG SA TOKA TOKA

BINIGYANG-PARANGAL ng Manila Water ang iba't ibang lokal na pamahalaan at ilang pambansang ahensiya bilang pagkilala sa lubos na pagsuporta ng mga ito sa pagpapalaganap ng programang Toka Toka, ang una at natatanging adbokasiya sa bansa na nakatuon sa pamamahala ng nagamit na tubig o wastewater.

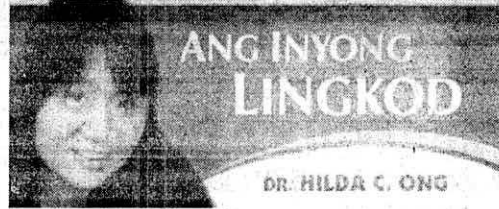
Ipinaliwanag ni Manila Water President at CEO Ferdinand Dela Cruz na ang "Toka Toka" ay nagsimula noong taong 2012 bilang isang simpleng information material para sa mga pamayanan upang matugunan ang pangangailangan sa pamamahala ng nagamit na tubig. Makalipas lamang ang ilang taon, ang Toka Toka ay naging mas matagumpay bilang isang adbokasiyang nakatuon sa pangangalaga ng kapaligiran na naghikikayat sa bawat indibidwal o organisasyon na gawin ang kanilang 'toka' upang ma-protectahan ang kapaligiran sa pamamagitan ng 4 na payak na paraan (i) pagpapakonekta sa sewer line ng Manila Water (ii) pagpapasip-sip ng posonegro kada limang taon (iii) tamang pagtatapon ng basura o waste segregation (iv) at pakikilahok sa (IEC) impormasyon, edukasyon at komunikasyon sa pagpapahalaga ng nagamit na tubig.

Ang Toka Toka ay nakatutulong din ng malaki sa kasalukuyang pagsisikap na linisin at buhaying muli ang Manila Bay kasabay ng pagtatayo ng iba pang imprastraktura ng Manila Water para sa nagamit na tubig, at palawakin ang sewer network upang matiyak ang wastong pagbali ng nagamit na tubig sa mga kailugan.

Ang Toka Toka Partners Convergence 2019 ay nagbigay-pugay sa mga barangay sa East Zone na nagka-

mit ng pinakamataas na availment rate sa desludging o pagpapasipsip ng posonegro. Ang Barangay Kasilawan ng Makati City ay nagkamit ng 95% availment rate na sinundan naman ng Barangay Tejeros ng Makati City na may antas na 94.4% at Barangay Muntinlawa ng Antipolo City na nagkamit ng 94.2%.

Ang 23 lungsod at munisipalidad na sineserbisuhan ng Manila Water na kinabibilangan ng lalawigan ng Rizal, ay kinilala rin para sa mga natatanging kontribusyon nito sa adbokasiyang Toka Toka ng Manila Water tulad ng pagbibigay ng suporta sa pagsasagawa ng IEC campaigns, pagboluntaryo sa paglilinis ng



mga sapa at ilog, pagsuporta para sa mga desludging activities at iba pa.

Binigyang-pugay at parangal din ang patuloy na pagsuporta ng iba't ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan sa programang Toka Toka ng Manila Water. Kabilang sa mga kinilala ang DENR, DILG, DPWH, DOH, PRRC, MMDA at MWSS.

Sa kabila nito, hiniling din ni Manila Water Chief Operating Officer Geodino Carpio sa mga LGUs na pabilisin ang pag-apruba ng permiso sa paghuhukay o (issuance of permit to excavate) para sa

mabilisang pagtatayo at paglalagat ng sewer pipes. Dagdag pa ni Carpio, ang Manila Water ngayon ay kasalukuyang namamahala ng 40 sewage treatment plants na kayang magsagawa ng treatment na higit 308 million liters na nagamit na tubig kada araw.

Ang DILG, sa pamamagitan ni Undersecretary Martin Dino, ay nanawagan sa mga barangay na suportahan ang programa at binigyang-diin din ang pangunahing pagpapahalaga at pagpapatupad ng mga umiiral na batas ukol sa tubig at nagamit na tubig.



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Dredging at iba pang civil works sa Ilog Pasig, iniatas ni PRRD sa PRRC

NILINAW ni Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia, sa ilalim ng Administrative Order No. 16 ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na lumikha sa Manila Bay Task Force ay naging mandato ng PRRC ang dredging, pag-aalis ng mga estruktura at paglilinis sa Ilog Pasig.

"Maraming nagpapanggap na kanila ang dredging ng Pasig River pero malinaw sa AO No. 16 na ang PRRC ang magsasagawa ng civil works sa Ilog Pasig," diin ni Goitia na mas kilala bilang Ka Pepeton.

"Siguro nakita ng Pangulo kung gaano kaepektibo ang PRRC kaya binigyan ang komisyon ng mas defined at matibay na mandato at direktiba."

Nakasaad sa AO No. 16 na ang PRRC ang magtitiyak ng enforcement at abatement ng lahat ng legal easement sa magkabilang gilid ng Pasig River at mga daluyang tubig tulad ng mga ilog, sapa at estero.

Ang PRRC rin ang inatasan sa Manila Bay Task Force na magsagawa ng reloksyon sa informal settler families (ISFs) o mga iskuwater at iba pang labag

sa batas na umookupa ng mga easement sa Pasig River.

"Ang pinakamahalaga sa AO No. 16, we must undertake civil works, such as dredging, clearing of structures, cleaning of the Pasig River and all the esteros and waterways that drain into the Manila Bay," diin ni Goitia.

"Kaya ngayong malinaw na ang aming mandato batay sa direktiba ng ating mahal na Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte, mananagot sa PRRC ang lahat ng mga may ilegal na estruktura sa tabi ng Pasig River at lahat ng tributaryo nito lalo sa mga estero," dagdag ni Goitia.



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20 FEB 2019

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Nakasaad sa AO No. 16 na ang PRRC ang magtitiyak ng enforcement at abatement ng lahat ng legal easement sa magkabilang gilid ng Pasig River at mga daluyang tubig tulad ng mga ilog, sapa at estero.

Ang PRRC rin ang inatasan sa Manila Bay Task Force na magsagawa ng reloasyon sa informal settler families (ISFs) o mga iskuwater at iba pang labag sa batas na umookupa ng mga easement sa Pasig River.

“Ang pinakamahalaga sa AO No. 16, we must undertake civil works, such as dredging, clearing of structures, cleaning of the Pasig River and all the esteros and waterways that drain into the Manila Bay,” diin ni Goitia.

“Kaya ngayong malinaw na ang aming mandato batay sa direktiba ng ating mahal na Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, mananagot sa PRRC ang lahat ng mga may ilegal na estruktura sa tabi ng Pasig River at lahat ng tributaryo nito lalo sa mga estero,” dagdag ni Goitia.



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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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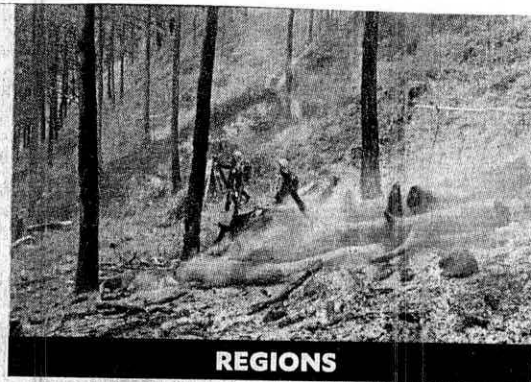
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REGIONS

Forest fires have razed 180 hectares

BAGUIO CITY—At least 180 hectares of forestland in Benguet and Mountain Province have been razed by fire since January, the Bureau of Fire Protection said. Sections of popular mountain trails, including a route to Mt. Pulag, were destroyed, prompting officials to restrict access to these areas. A tourism officer says trails in Bauko, Mountain Province, will remain closed until these are rehabilitated. —STORY BY KIMBERLIE QUITASOL

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THURSDAY, February 28, 2019
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Editor
Robert Jaworski L. Abaño

REGIONS

BURNT FOREST Firefighters put out a forest fire that started in Duacan village in Kabayan, Benguet, and spread to neighboring areas, including parts of Akiki trail, one of the routes to Mt. Pulag.
—PHOTO COURTESY OF BFP CORDILLERA



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Forest fires spread trek trails closed

BFP says 180 hectares of forests in Benguet and Mountain Province razed

By Kimberlie Quitasol
@kimberliequitasolINQ

BAGUIO CITY—Authorities in the Cordillera closed several mountain trekking trails, deployed firefighters and formed a task force to avert the spread of fire that continued to destroy upland forests.

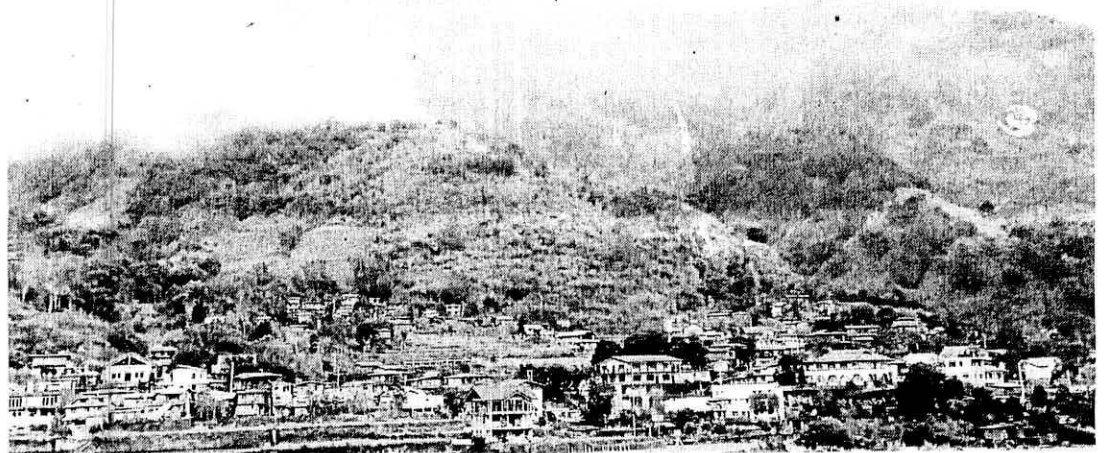
On Wednesday, the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) said it had recorded 90 forest and grass fires in Benguet and Mountain Province since January, with one incident killing five foresters in Benguet last week.

The forest fires had razed more than 180 hectares in the two provinces, prompting local officials to form an interagency task force to address the problem.

"Forest fire prevention needs an interagency response and government agencies must work together to protect our forests, our environment," Senior Supt. Maria Sofia Mendoza, BFP regional director, said in a press briefing here on Wednesday.

Off limits

The Spanish trail leading to Bauko 7 Peaks and the Usan trail going to Mt. Bato in Bauko town, Mountain Province, have been off limits to trekkers since Feb. 20 after a fire hit portions of Mt. Am-o spanning Bauko and Tadian towns.



TRAIL FIRE A patch of pine forest in Kabayan, Benguet, is destroyed by fire, prompting local officials to close some mountain trails to trekkers. —PHOTO COURTESY OF BFP CORDILLERA

Arsenia Addon, tourism officer of Bauko, said the fire at Mt. Am-o, a watershed, started on Feb. 17 and raged for six days. A farmer from Tadian was killed in that fire.

"The trails will remain closed until the burned areas are rehabilitated," Addon said.

On Feb. 20, four foresters of Philex Mining Corp. and an elderly resident were killed in a fire that hit a forest area covering 60 ha that straddles Itogon and Tuba towns in Benguet.

The charred bodies of the four foresters were found 50 meters below Philex's tree

nursery, which was also destroyed by the blaze.

The body of the fifth casualty, a retired company employee, was located 40 meters from where the foresters were found.

Water supply

In the tourist town of Sagada in Mountain Province, authorities recorded at least seven forest fires this month. The most recent fire gutted 6 ha of forest at Barangay Aguid on Feb. 21.

Sagada Mayor James Pooten said water supply for inns was adversely affected by the fires as waterlines and some private

water sources were damaged.

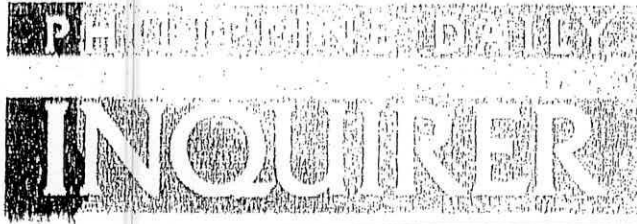
"The site of forest fires might disappoint visitors, but so far there have been no reports of cancellation of bookings from the inns," Pooten said.

According to Mendoza, the BFP lacks equipment and personnel to fight forest fires but the task force is expected to provide reinforcement.

While the press briefing was ongoing, Baguio firemen were called to put out a grass fire near the Baguio City Economic Zone at Barangay Loakan here and another fire at Sitio Tuding in Itogon. INQ



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Sustainable fun, responsible tourism

Sustainability is the theme of the Department of Tourism's (DOT) "It's more fun in the Philippines" campaign, (re)launched last week at the National Museum of Natural History. Graced by Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat and her Department of the Interior and Local Government counterpart Eduardo Año, the "reboot" came with a simplified, rewoven logo; a new, open-source font; and a new approach to marketing: crowd-sourcing photos and videos from travelers who use the hashtag #itsmorefuninthephilippines.

The event began by trumpeting Boracay's rehabilitation and Manila Bay's cleanup, holding them up as templates for the new approach to tourism. "We are coming into 2019 with a renewed and refreshed sense of purpose. With more and more travelers conscious about their ecological footprint, the cultures and experiences they are consuming, and simply wanting to know how they can give back, the time is ripe for a repurposing of the word 'fun,'" Secretary Puyat said.

Under the museum's iconic "Tree of Life," seemingly detached from the urban chaos a stone's throw away, it is easy to feel optimistic about our tourism prospects—and proud of our natural heritage. The exhibits of the recently opened museum were most impressive—from the 6-meter-long stuffed crocodile, Lolong, to the rhinoceros fossils that pushed back the record of human existence in the country to an incredible 700,000 years. The National Museum complex has truly emerged as a great attraction, and I should go back soon for the two others—the Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Anthropology.

Even so, as I left the museum I was also filled with concerns about the sustainability



SECOND OPINION

GIDEON LASCO

both of the tourism campaign and the country's tourist attractions—that is, our natural and cultural heritage.

In the first place, there are nagging questions about our "carrying capacity." Asked about plans to limit tourists, Secretary Puyat reiterated the paradigm of sustainability, but it remains unclear how this can be implemented, particularly in areas where local government units and commercial interests get in the way. Mindful that mountains and other fragile ecosystems can also be mismanaged, perhaps it's about time to consider a National Park Service independent of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In the second place, there are also questions about whether the government's highly touted rehabilitation has been structural or merely superficial. While there seems to be some genuine effort toward meaningful reforms and, even now, some measurable outcomes (e.g. decreased coliform levels in Boracay), the seeming rush to pursue reclamation projects in Manila

Bay will undermine the government's message.

Thirdly, we can also interrogate to what depth and extent the government wants to talk about sustainability. Yes, it's important to highlight responsible tourism, but preserving our biodiversity is not just about not throwing trash or contributing to environmental organizations—it's also about stopping habitat destruction and changing our consumption practices. It's about calling out mining interests and real-estate developers who corrupt our government. And, yes, it's about problematizing the unintended consequences of tourism, and recognizing the tensions between conservation and people's economic needs.

Finally, the best efforts of DOT can be enfeebled by some of the pronouncements and policies of the administration itself. During the press conference, Secretary Año was right to point out that the terrorist threat is confined to just a small part of the country. But what of numerous drug-related killings, including that of Jee Ick-joo—which until now many Koreans cannot forget? What of Mr. Duterte's—and now Teddy Locsin Jr.'s—Holocaust remarks? And what of Manila's road and air traffic woes?

Only with a government that respects human rights and provides efficient public services can Filipinos confidently and wholeheartedly recommend the country to visitors.

Fortunately, there seems to be openness on the part of Secretary Puyat to engage with various stakeholders, and if her department's paradigm leads us to raise hard questions, then it's a way forward. Despite all our concerns, surely we can all rally behind a tourism campaign with sustainability at its heart.

glasco@inquirer.com.ph



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Strategic Communication Initiatives Service

Torrens Title holder is entitled to possession

*Dear PAO,
I am the registered owner of a certain land that I inherited from my parents. A portion of the said land is being occupied by Peter, so I demanded that he vacate it because I will need it for a certain project. Peter refused and claimed that he owned the land as this was his inheritance from his parents, and he has been occupying the same for a long period of time. He further said that the land was outside of my titled property. I engaged the services of a geodetic engineer for the relocation of my property, and we found out that the portion being occupied by Peter is really within my property. Do I have the right to possess the land occupied by Peter?*



DEAR PAO
**PERSIDA
ACOSTA**

Jaime

Dear Jaime,
Please be informed that "a title, once registered, cannot be defeated even by adverse, open and notorious possession. The certificate of title issued is an absolute and indefeasible evidence of ownership of the property in favor of the person whose name appears therein. It is binding and conclusive upon the whole world. All persons must take notice and no one can plead ignorance of the registration" (*Heirs of Leopoldo Vencilao Sr., vs Court of Appeals, et al.*, GR 123713, April 1, 1998, Ponente: Associate Justice

Josue Bellosillo).

You have a Torrens Title to prove your ownership over the land, while Peter cannot present any proof of his claim. Article 428 of the New Civil Code of the Philippines states that "the owner has the right to enjoy and dispose of a thing, without other limitations than those authorized by law. The owner has also a right of action against the holder and possessor of the thing in order to recover it."

In the case of *Abobon vs Abobon, et al.* (GR 155830, Aug. 15, 2012), the Supreme Court through Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin stated:

"First of all, a fundamental principle in land registration under the Torrens system is that a certificate of title serves as evidence of an indefeasible and incontrovertible title to the property in favor of

the person whose name appears therein. The certificate of title thus becomes the best proof of ownership of a parcel of land; hence, anyone who deals with property registered under the Torrens system may rely on the title and need not go beyond the title. This reliance on the certificate of title rests on the doctrine of indefeasibility of the land title, which has long been well-settled in this jurisdiction. It is only when the acquisition of the title is attended with fraud or bad faith that the doctrine of indefeasibility finds no application.

"Accordingly, we rule for the respondents on the issue of the preferential right to the possession of the land in question. Their having preferential right conformed to the age-old rule that whoever held a Torrens title in his name is

entitled to the possession of the land covered by the title. Indeed, possession, which is the holding of a thing or the enjoyment of a right, was but an attribute of their registered ownership.

"It is beyond question under the law that the owner has not only the right to enjoy and dispose of a thing without other limitations than those established by law, but also the right of action against the holder and possessor of the thing in order to recover it. He may exclude any person from the enjoyment and disposal of the thing, and, for this purpose, he may use such force as may be reasonably necessary to repel or prevent an actual or threatened unlawful physical invasion or usurpation of his property."

Applying the above-quoted deci-

sion in your situation, you have a preferential right over the land being possessed by Peter, because you have the Torrens Title as a proof of ownership. Whoever held the certificate of title is also entitled to the possession of the land. As an attribute of ownership, you may exclude Peter from the enjoyment or usurpation of your property.

We hope that we were able to answer your queries. Please be reminded that this advice is based solely on the facts you have narrated and our appreciation of the same. Our opinion may vary when other facts are changed or elaborated.

Editor's note: Dear PAO is a daily column of the Public Attorney's Office. Questions for Chief Acosta may be sent to dearpao@manila-times.net.