

01 APR 2019

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DAY : Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



DENR's Cimatu leads

simultaneous river, estero cleanup for Manila Bay rehabilitation

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy A. Cimatu on Sunday led simultaneous river and estero cleanups in 42 barangays in Metro Manila as part of the effort to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

Cimatu believes that to rehabilitate Manila Bay, it is imperative to stop pollution at source.

Some of the most polluted rivers and esteros that drain out to Manila Bay have been identified and targeted for the simultaneous river cleanup by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which is taking the lead in the "Battle for Manila Bay," a P4.7-billion, seven-year program to save Manila Bay from environmental degradation.

The chairmen of these 42 barangay in the cities of Quezon, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Malabon and Navotas are also set to sign an agreement with the DENR.

Dubbed Kasunduan (Filipino term for agreement), the memorandum of agreement underscores the barangays' commitment to help improve water quality, proper management of solid wastes, including the promotion of waste reduction, reuse and recycling, partnership in community mobilization, and in information and education campaigns for water quality and



ELEMENTS of the Bureau of Fire Protection-NCR and the local community conduct a cleanup at Estero de San Lazaro along C.M. Recto Avenue in Manila on Sunday, March 31. DENR PHOTO

solid-waste management, habitat restoration, climate and disaster resiliency.

Simultaneous cleanups of rivers, creeks, esteros and other waterways were conducted by all the barangay covering the Tullahan-Tinajeros river system, including private-sector part-

ners and other national government agencies supporting the rehabilitation of these creeks.

The rehabilitation of the Tullahan-Tinajeros river system will positively affect efforts to clean up Manila Bay, Cimatu said.

The Tullahan-Tinajeros River System spans

27 kilometers, from La Mesa Water Reservoir in Fairview, Quezon City, all the way to the mouth of Manila Bay at Centennial Park in Navotas City. It is one of the most polluted waterways in Metro Manila and a major tributary of Manila Bay.

San Miguel Corp. recently pledged assistance for the dredging and cleanup of the river. Other private-sector partners such as the North Luzon Expressway, Vanson and Boysen Philippines have also pledged continuing support to the rehabilitation of the creeks and tributaries of the Tullahan River.

The simultaneous cleanup of the creeks and tributaries in the Tullahan-Tinajeros River System is a joint partnership of the DENR with other national government agencies such as the Department of the Interior and Local Government and with selected cities and barangays, Department of Public Works and Highways, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, the private sector, the schools and civil-society organizations.

Cleanup activities were also held at the Estero de Tripa de Gallina, Estero de Magdalena, Marikina River/Manggahan Floodway, Pasig River, Malabon-Navotas River, Las Piñas-Zapote River, San Juan River, Parañaque River and Taguig-Pateros River. **Jonathan L. Mayuga**



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DEMOLITION OF SLUMS PART OF MANILA BAY REHAB

MARAWI EVAGUEE MUST 'FLEE' AGAIN DUE TO METRO WATERWAY CLEANUP

By Jhesset O. Enano
@JhessetEnanoINQ

When bombs began to rain on her Marawi City neighborhood in 2017, Subaida Mangutara was left with no choice but to flee.

The 69-year-old woman found refuge in the company of her daughter Rakima, who for years had lived at the border of Parañaque and Pasay cities, far from their native land.

But while away from strife, Mangutara's new dwelling was far from ideal. Along with other displaced families, home was amid heaps of garbage and human waste thrown into Estero Tripa de Gallina.

Facing demolition

The entire family, however, would soon be uprooted again, after the government marked their makeshift home as one of the thousands that would be demolished in the ongoing effort to clean up the waterways that flow into Manila Bay.

Informal settlers living along riverbanks and on estuaries in Metro Manila had long been blamed for the pollutants that end up in the bay.

Urban blight

A ballooning urban population, alongside the neglect of environmental laws, has contributed to the blight most evident in the poorest pockets of Metro Manila.

While many informal settlers like Mangutara embraced the idea of a cleaner environment, anxiety continues to grip them.

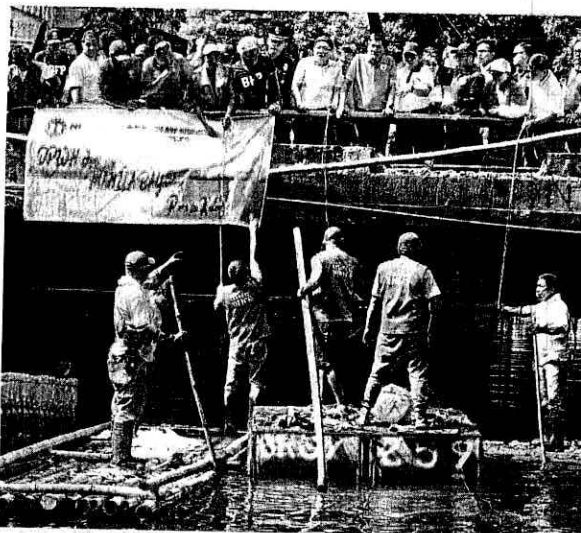
On Sunday, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu assured Rakima and other families living along Tripa de Gallina that they would be transferred to a place with better living conditions.

Nine rivers

Cimatu, along with Interior Secretary Eduardo Año and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Danilo Lim, traveled across the metropolis to oversee the simultaneous cleanup drive in nine rivers that feed into Manila Bay.

Among these are Tinajeros River, Tullahan River, Pasig River, Marikina River, Las Piñas-Zapote River, Taguig-Pateros River, Malabon-Navotas River, San Juan River and Parañaque River.

Tripa de Gallina flows into



SIMULTANEOUS CLEANUP Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Danilo Lim oversee the clearing of Estero de Magdalena in Tondo, Manila, on Sunday, part of the simultaneous cleanup of esteros linked to nine rivers that feed into Manila Bay. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

Parañaque River.

"We just hope that we would be relocated to a better place, not to another place of conflict," Mangutara said. "If they will just send us back to Mindanao, we don't want to go back there."

Cavite, Bulacan relocation sites

The relocation of informal settlers is part of the second phase of the ambitious bay rehabilitation program dubbed the "Battle for Manila Bay."

Cimatu earlier said that local governments should be on top of relocating more than 230,000 families along esteros, in coordination with the newly formed Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development.

"Right now, we have around 11,000 units available for relocation in Cavite and Bulacan provinces," Año told reporters on Sunday. "The receiving local government units should also be prepared."

For Zenaida Bibat, 74, and Tita Mora, 85, the demolitions should be expected and accepted by those living along the river.

As longtime residents at the Parañaque side of Tripa de Gallina, both women have seen how the waterway has changed over decades of urban decay.

"I know that a part of my house might be destroyed once they enforce the three-meter easement," Bibat said. "But it's alright because we have to fol-

low the law."

Joseph Vakunawa, 38, and Mary Aileen Wong, 34, however, offered a somber tale for the thousands who would soon face the government's whip against informal settler communities.

The couple used to live in a house on stilts that stood on Estero de Magdalena in Manila, where trash had accumulated so much that the water was then almost impossible to see.

No jobs at relocation

In February 2017, they were among the hundreds of families relocated to Pandi, Bulacan province. But the promise of a new beginning was still far off, with no jobs anywhere nearby.

"So we return here because this is where our livelihood is," said Vakunawa, who sells cell phone accessories on Claro M. Recto in Manila.

Standing on the ground where their house once stood, the couple watched volunteer workers scoop out plastics and other junk from Magdalena, already black from mud and silt.

Even with a new roof over their heads, the couple would rather sleep on the streets on days they have to make ends meet in Manila.

"We would not return here if we can actually live in our new community," Wong said. "But how can you stop people from returning when there's nothing to eat there?" INQ



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Manila Water kicks off clean-up drive in Taguig creek

EAST Zone concessionaire Manila Water led volunteers from the Ayala Group as they joined the 'Battle for the Rivers and Esteros', a campaign spearheaded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that involves the simultaneous clean-up activities of creeks, esterros, and tributaries that all drain into Manila Bay.

More than 500 employees from the Ayala conglomerate have volunteered to clean Hagonoy creek in Taguig City, one of the many waterways that the DENR targets to revive under the campaign which aims to involve communities and empower them to protect their own waterways.

According to Manila Water President and CEO Ferdinand Dela Cruz, the Ayala Group's participation hopes to

strengthen the company's commitment in helping the country restore its precious waterways.

"Manila Water's Toka Toka is our program that aims to clean and revive our waterways through these important four ownable acts: solid waste segregation, desludging every 5-7 years, connecting to sewer line and educating the community," he said.

Manila Water Advocacy and Research Department Head Fernando Busuego III said the 12-month clean-up activity is part of Manila Water's Toka Toka campaign, which promotes environmental protection and seeks to revive the health of rivers and water bodies by reducing pollution. Toka Toka is the first and only used water movement in the Philippines that encourages individuals and communities to do their share in environmental protection.



Battle for Esteros. Battle of all. Photo shows Manila Water President and CEO Ferdinand Dela Cruz (left) with MDC president Dante Abando.

"As a pioneering environmental protection advocate, one of our 'toka' or share is to consistently engage in clean-up activities and educate people on how they can contribute in protecting the environment," Busuego added. "This is the reason we launched our Toka Toka advocacy program. We encourage communities to put in their respective stakes for cleaner and healthier surroundings."

Since its inception in

2012, the program continues to foster and strengthen partnerships with various national government agencies, local government units, (LGUs), and the private sector to further advance the movement.

Ayala subsidiary Makati Development Corporation also deployed a loader and three excavators that facilitated in the collection and disposal of waste collected during the clean-up.



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Cleanup drive sa Metro Manila: 1.2M kilo ng basura nakolekta

Daan-daang volunteer mula sa iba't ibang sektor ang nagsama-sama sa isinagawang cleanup drive sa mga ilog at estero sa Metro Manila kung saan tinatayang 1.2 milyong kilo ng basura ang nakuha sa nakalipas na tatlong linggo.

Ito ang inanunsyo ni Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, kasunod nang pagpaaalala sa mga lokal na opisyal na magsagawa ng weekly cleanup sa kanilang lugar bilang bahagi ng rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay. Giit ng opisyal, mahaharap sa parusa dahil sa kapabayaan ang mga ito kung hindi susunod sa tungkulin.

Bukod kay Año, pinangunahan din ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu ang paglilinis sa Estero de Magdalena sa Tondo, Maynila at sinabing nakita nito ang maraming problema nang puntahan ang mga estero. Dito iginiit ng opisyal ang mahigpit na pagpapatupad sa Ecological Waste Management Act.



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'BATTLE OF ESTEROS' PARA SA CLEAN UP DRIVE

SABAY-SABAY na nagsagawa ng clean-up drive ang mga barangay officials sa Metro Manila sa pangunguna ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na tinawag na Battle of Esteros bilang patuloy na bahagi ng Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program.

Mismong sina Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu at Interior Secretary Eduardo Año ang nanguna sa ginanap na clean-up drive sa bahagi ng Estero de Tripa de Gallina sa Pasay City.

Kabilang sa mga lugar na tinutukan ng mga opisyal para linisin ang lugar ay ang Tullahan, Tinajeros River, Marikina River, Manggahan Floodway, Pasig River, Malabon-Navotas River, Las Pinas-Zapote River, San Juan River, Parañaque River at Taguig-Pateros

River kung saan katuwang din ang mga tauhan ng barangay sa mga nabanggit na lugar para maging matagumpay ang proyekto.

Nakita ni Cimatu ang grabeng sitwasyon ng mga naturang ilog kung kayat panahon na aniyang simulan ang paglilinis dito dahil sa ang tubig ng mga naturang mga ilog ay may koneksyon sa daluyan ng tubig patungong Manila Bay.

Todo asikaso rin sina DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda at DILG Undersecretary Epimaco Densing III sa paglilinis ng mga estero sa lugar na pawang umaasang sa pamamagitan ng naturang hakbang, maitatanim na sa mga isipan ng bawat isa na matigil na ang pagtatapon ng mga basura sa mga estero't kanal sa Metro Manila. **BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.**



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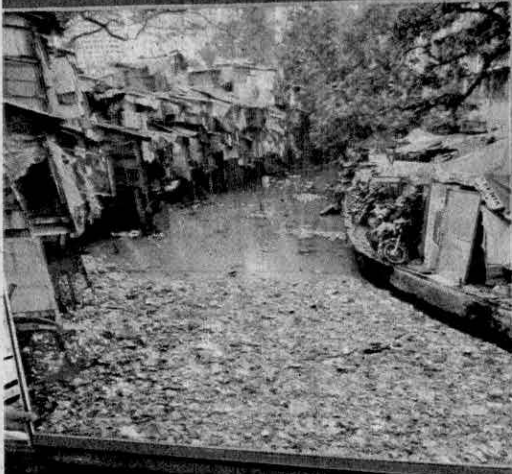
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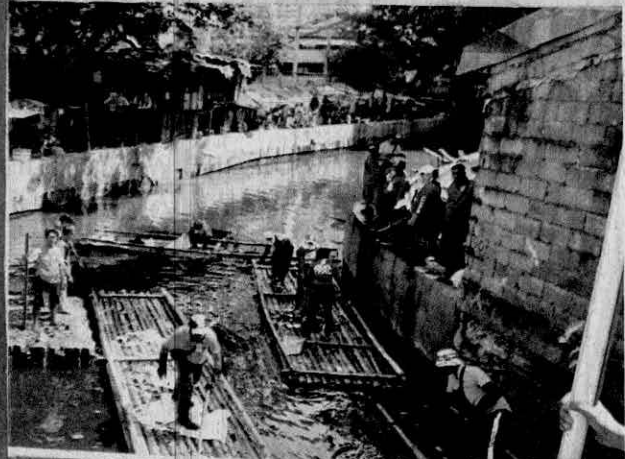
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SEE THE DIFFERENCE -
A photo mural of garbage-clogged Estero de Magdalena in Tondo, Manila, contrasts with its present state after government efforts to clean up waterways that drain into Manila Bay. Several agencies have teamed up for the massive clean-up drive.
(Ali Vicoy)

ESTERO DE MAGDALENA BEFORE



ESTERO DE MAGDALENA AFTER





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A government worker uses a backhoe to remove garbage from the Estero de Tripa de Gallina in Pasay City yesterday as part of a simultaneous cleanup, led by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, of waterways that lead to Manila Bay. Inset shows the result of yesterday's cleanup of Estero de Magdalena in Tondo, Manila.

EDD GUMBAN



Malaya Business Insight

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Clean-up. Volunteers join the clean-up of the Hagonoy creek in Taguig City as Manila Water and the Ayala group, in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, launch the Battle for the Rivers and Esteros, a metro-wide clean-up activity that is part of Manila Water's TOKA-TOKA program in support the DENR's efforts to prevent Manila Bay from further degradation.

PHOTO BY ROLLY SALVADOR



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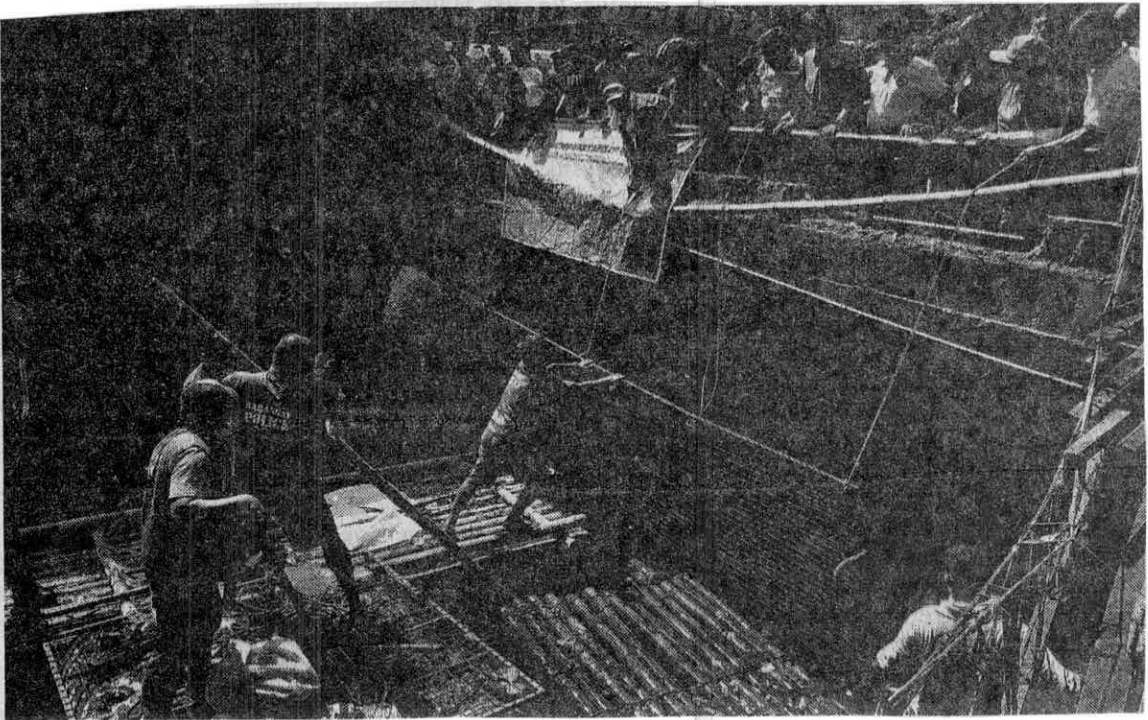
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JOINT EFFORT.
Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu and Interior Secretary Eduardo Año spearhead the simultaneous cleanup of Metro Manila's esteros and waterways flowing into Manila Bay.
Norman Cruz





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Battle is joined Over 250 volunteers from different barangays along with other government employees join the battle to revive rivers and esteros in San Juan as part of the overall drive to revive Manila Bay.

YUMMIE DINGDING



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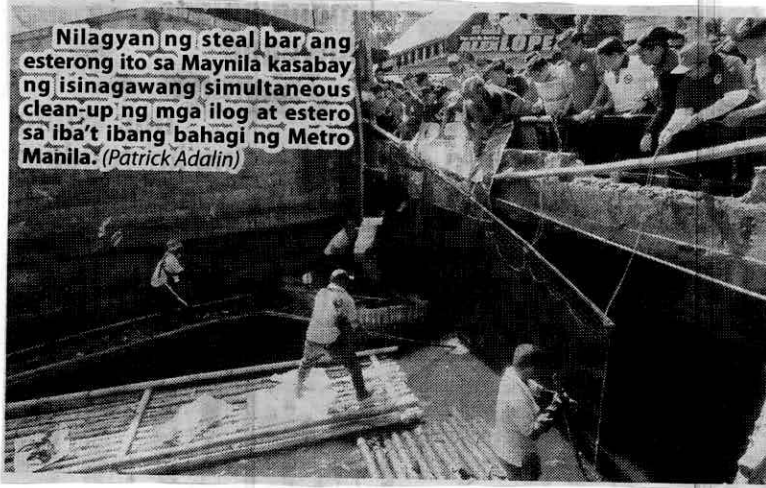
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CLEAN-UP DRIVE -- Nagsagawa ng clean-up drive sa Tripa de Galina at nagtulong-tulong ang mga volunteer para hakutin ang sandamakmak na basura sa mga estero na nagiging sanhi ng pagbara na dinadaluhan ng ilog sa boundary ng Pasay City at Parañaque City kahapon. **(Eric Ocapan)**



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Ginagamitan ng backhoe ang esterong ito sa Pasay City upang mas higit na malinis ang daluyan ng tubig na bumabagsak sa Manila Bay bilang bahagi ng hangarin ng DENR at ng mga lokal na pamahalaan sa Metro Manila na nakapaligid sa naturang look na muling maibalik ang dating linis at ganda nito. (Kuha ni Edd Gumban)



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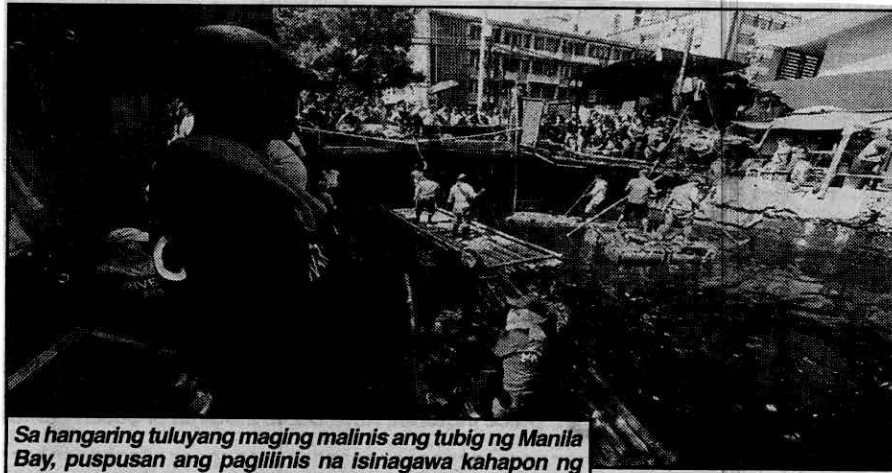


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Sa hangaring tuluyang maging malinis ang tubig ng Manila Bay, puspusan ang paglilinis na isinagawa kahapon ng mga tauhan ng DENR at lokal na pamahalaan ng Maynila sa Estero de Magdalena sa Tondo. (Kuha ni Edd Gumban)



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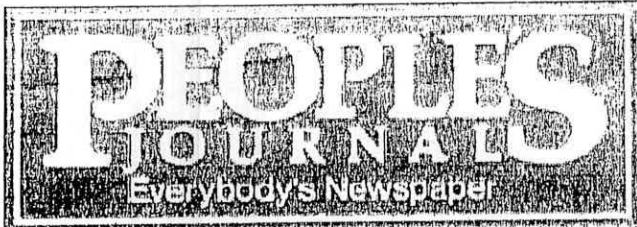
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PINANGUNAHAN nina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Sec. Roy Cima-
tu at Local Government Sec. Eduardo Año ang paglilinis sa mga estero sa Metro Manila na
dumadaloy sa Manila Bay. Kuha ni **NORMAN ARAGA**



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Gov't urged to ban single-use plastics

By Cory Martinez

THE EcoWaste Coalition has called on the government to ban single-use plastics to ease global plastic pollution crisis.

The call was made coinciding with the observance of the Earth Hour aimed at protecting the environment from single-use plastics.

The group's national coordinator Aileen Lucero stressed that the government has to get a ban on single-use plastics in place this year as the country's contribution to the global drive to protect the oceans from further plasticization.

"To halt the chemical and plastic contamination of our water bodies, particularly the oceans, the government has to adopt sweeping policy changes that will address the problem at source, incentivize single-use plastic reduction and disincentivize single-use plastic production," Lucero said.

She added that National Ban on Plastic and Plastic Products Act will be required to phase out single-use disposable plastics and usher in sustainable resource use.

"A National Action Plan will be needed to move our society away from our addiction to throw-away plastics," Lucero pointed out.

She also urged the manufacturers of fast-moving consumer goods to fast track the replacement of sin-

gle-use plastic packaging with alternative product delivery systems, like refill and reuse, with a clear plan and timeline.

"As for our citizens, we urge them to minimize, if not stop, the reckless use and disposal of single-use plastics, and to adopt consumption choices and habits that will lessen the generation of plastic garbage. We ask every waste generator to manage their discards responsibly to prevent plastics and other wastes from entering the marine environment," she added.

The group also took the opportunity to stress the importance of effectively enforcing the key environmental laws such as RA 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act), RA 9275 (Clean Water Act) and RA 6969 (Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act) to prevent chemicals and plastics from spilling into the oceans.

These pollution prevention laws, the group stressed, were enacted to protect the environment, including marine waters, from dumping and other environmentally-damaging acts.

According to the UN report "Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics," 80 percent of all pollution in the sea comes from land, including some eight million tons of plastic waste each year, that have cost the lives of one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals. Moreover, it causes \$8 billion in damage annually to marine ecosystems."



We are helping find solutions to plastic problem

THE problem with plastics is that most of it is non-biodegradable. Unlike natural materials like wood, paper, cloth, and leather, it doesn't break down into component molecules after a time. Some scientists say it may take 450 years – some say never – to break down the plastics we have in the world today.

Since plastic was invented in the late 19th century and production took off in the 1950s, 9.2 million tons of plastics have gone into production and 6.9 billion tons have become waste that grows by millions of tons every year. Between 5.3 million and 14 million tons a year are dumped mostly on coastal regions, thence into the sea. It stays there year after year, a lot of it ending in the stomachs of sea animals who then die from internal injuries.

One study has identified the Philippines as the No. 3 source of plastic wastes in the world's oceans, next to China and Indonesia. We are among the world's top users of such plastic products as food wrappers, bags, sachets for medicine, bottles, stirrers and straws for drinks.

In the worldwide search for solutions to the plastic problem, however, the Philippines has come up with its own contributions. A factory in Las Piñas today recycles "soft plastics" such as food wrappers into chairs which the Villar Social Institute for Poverty Alleviation is donating to public schools. Eco-bricks, building blocks made from used plastic,

are now being produced by Green Antz Builders for housing. San Miguel Corporation is now building roads out of recycled plastics. If the technology proves effective and meets all safety and quality requirements, the company said it may roll it out for large infrastructure products.

Last week, researchers of the biology department of the University of the Philippines Baguio were reported to have discovered four strains of bacteria capable of biodegrading Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) which is used to produce plastic bags, bottles, and wrappers. The bacterial strains had been collected from rock crevices in the Poon Bato spring in Botolan, Zambales. The researchers called for continuing research into other polymer-degrading microorganisms.

Similar researches and studies are now being conducted in other countries on this worldwide problem of plastic wastes. The Philippines may have gained some notoriety as the No. 3 source of plastic pollution in the world's oceans today, but it is good to know that we are making our contribution to the search for solutions – through innovative ways to recycle plastic waste into useful articles such as chairs and road paving materials.

The research at UP Baguio may also lead to ways to make plastics biodegradable like all other materials in our world today, so it will one day it will cease be a problem and a danger especially to life in the world's oceans.



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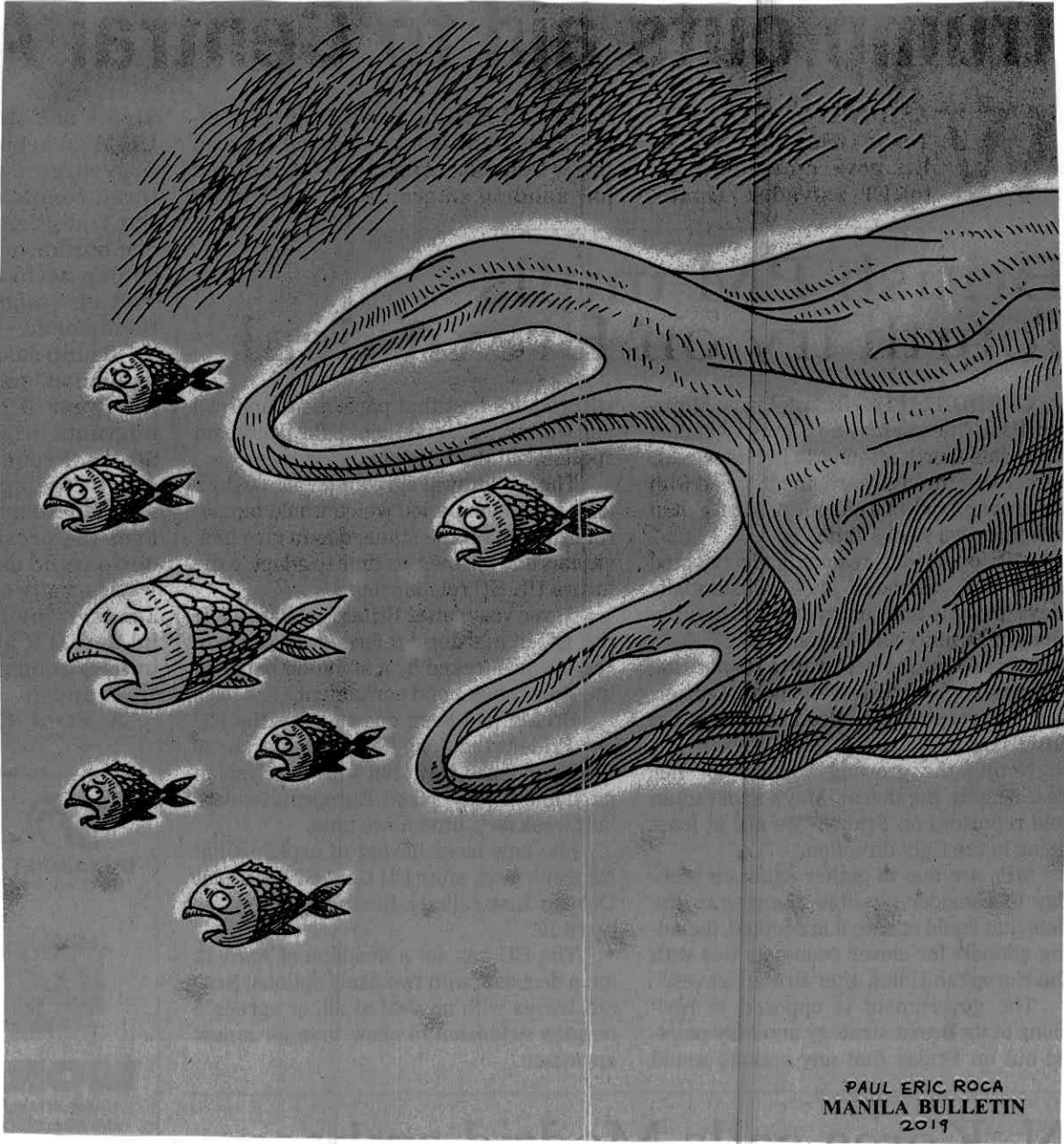
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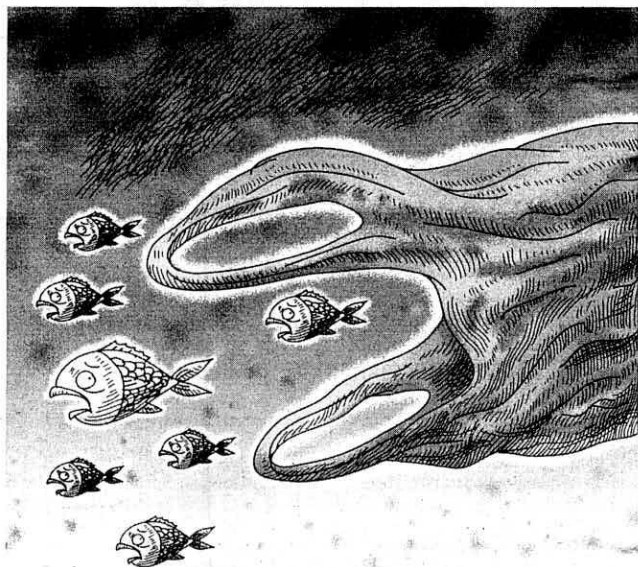
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PAUL ERIC ROGA
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Tumutulong tayong humanap ng solusyon sa problema sa plastic

ANG problema sa plastic ay pagiging non-biodegradable nito. Hindi tulad ng ibang materyales tulad ng kahoy, papel, tela, at katad, hindi nabubulok sa paglipas ng panahon. Sinasabi ng ilang siyentista na maaaring abutin ng 450 years – ilan ang nagsabing hindi kailanman – mabubulok ang mga plastic na mayroon tayo ngayon sa mundo.

Dahil naimbento ang plastic noong huling bahagi ng ika-19 na siglo at nagsimula ang produksiyon noong bandang 1950, nasa 9.2 bilyong tonelada na ng plastic ang nalikha at 6.9 bilyon ang nagiging basura na patuloy na lumalago sa milyon tonelada kada taon. Nasa pagitan ng 5.3 milyon at 14 milyon tonelada kada taon ang itinatabak kalimitan sa mga baybaying bahagi, na napupunta sa mga dagat. Nananatili ito doon taon man ang makalipasm, at karamihan ay napupunta sa mga tiyan ng mga lamang-dagat na kalaunan ay namamatay dahil sa mga sugat sa loob ng katawan.

Isang pag-aaral ang kumilala sa Pilipinas bilang ikatlo sa pangunahing pinanggagalingan ng basurang plastic sa mga karagatan ng mundo, sunod sa China at Indonesia. Kabilang tayo sa nangungunang gumagamit sa buong mundo ng mga produktong plastic bilang pambalot ng pagkain, bags, pakete para sa medisina, bote, panghalo at mga straw ng mga inumin.

Gayunman, sa pandaigdigang paghahanap ng solusyon para sa problema sa plastic, nakahanap ang Pilipinas ng sarili nitong kontribusyon. Isang pabrika sa Las Pinas ngayon ang nagre-recycle ng mga “soft plastics” tulad ng mga pagbalot sa mga pagkain upang gawin upuan na ibinibigay ng Villar Social Institute for Poverty Alleviation sa mga pampublikong paaralan. Mga eco-bricks naman na gawa sa gamit na plastic, ang nililikha ngayon ng Green Antz Builders para pabahay. Nagtatayo rin ngayon ang San Miguel Corporation ng mga daan at kalsada na gawa sa mga ni-recycled na plastic. Kung mapatunayan na epektibo ang teknolohiya at makamit nito ang ligtas at kalidad na kinakailangan, sinabi ng kompanya na maaari nila itong gamitin para sa malaking produktong pang-imprastruktura.

Nitong nakaraang linggo, napaulat na nakadiskubre ang mga mananaliksik sa biology department ng University of the Philippines Baguio ng apat na strains ng bacteria na kayang bulukin o i-biodegrade ang Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) na ginagamit sa paglikha ng mga plastic bag, botelya at mga pambalot. Nakolekta ang bacterial strains mula sa mga siwang ng bato sa Poon Bato spring sa Botolan, Zambales. Nanawagan ang mga mananaliksik ng patuloy na pag-aaral sa iba pang polymer-degrading microorganisms.

Kahalintulad na mga pananaliksik at pag-aaral ang isinasagawa ngayon sa iba pang mga bansa kaugnay ng malaking problema ng mundo sa basurang plastic. Nakalulungkot man na ikatlo ang Pilipinas sa pinagmumulan ng basurang plastic na ngayon ay natambak sa mga karagatan ng mundo, nakatutuwang malaman na gumagawa tayo ng sarili nating kontribusyon upang humanap ng solusyon – sa pamamagitan ng mga inobatibong paraan upang i-recycle ang plastic at gawin isang kapaki-pakinabang na bagay tulad ng mga upuan at materyales sa paggawa ng mga kalsada.

Maaari ring magbigay ng paraan ang naging pananaliksik ng UP Baguio para gawing biodegradable ang mga plastic tulad ng ibang materyales sa mundo, upang isang araw mawawala na ang dala nitong problema at panganib lalo na sa mga buhay na nasa mga karagatan ng mundo.



SHORT-TERM MEASURE

EO SOUGHT FOR NWRB TRANSFORMATION

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@RonWDomingoINQ

The National Economic Development Authority is renewing the push for Malacañang to issue an executive order that will transform and strengthen the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) into a National Water Management Council (NWMC).

This is seen as a short-term measure toward water security in the Philippines as the Neda and other agencies that prepared the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 call on Congress to create a Department of Water and a Water Regulatory Commission.

Neda Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro said in a briefing this was also part of the Duterte administration's strategy when it comes to water resources.

"The strategy is to pursue institutional reforms such as streamlining processes involved in agencies to encourage and guide investments in water supply, sewerage and sanitation," Navarro said.

According to Neda and private-sector experts in the water supply and sanitation sector, there are at least 32 agencies that are involved in the management and regulation of this industry.

Navarro said enhancing the

NWRB into the NWMC was a measure the government could take pending the enactment of a proposed law for the creation of an "apex body" and the economic regulatory agency for the water sector.

"This measure may be implemented without the need for legislative action that is via an executive order," she said.

"The aim is to strengthen the power of the NWRB and providing it with additional manpower and financial resources," she added.

The need for an EO to reconfigure the NWRB has been raised last year but no such order has been issued yet. INQ



Angat reduces irrigation water to boost Metro supply—NWRB

ANGAT Dam's water allocation for irrigation has been cut to 35 meters per second from 40 to reserve more supply for Metro Manila, the National Water Resources Board said Sunday.

NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. told dzBB the cut will not affect farmland operations because in May the water needed for irrigation normally goes

down as farmers are about to harvest their crops.

Angat Dam irrigates several farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

David made his statement even as the Sulong Dignidad party-list said the Philippines' water concession law must be repealed so it could provide stiffer penalties

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CONSERVING WATER. A farmer in Benguet uses a water hose to irrigate his seedlings, putting into practice a water conservation method in Tuba town, a vegetable growing area, amid the onset of El Nino weather phenomenon. Government officials advise farmers in Benguet and other provinces to conserve water supply. **Dave Leprozo**

to the companies that fail to comply with distribution agreements.

"We need to add a provision imposing clear-cut penalties for the concessionaires who fail to comply with the concession agreement," said Sulong Dignidad president and first nominee Rico Paolo Quicho.

In a resolution dated March 28, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System ordered its Regulatory Office to study the imposition of penalties on Manila Water Co. Inc. when it failed to provide water 24 hours a day to customers.

David said they communicated with the National Irrigation Authority about the reduced allocation of water for irrigation, and it agreed.

"They [NIA] said it would still meet their needs, David said.

He said Angat Dam's water level was at 193 meters, which is normal. But they were continuing to reserve more water to make sure there would be no water shortage in the next months.



KARAGDAGANG TUBIG NAKUKUHA NG MANILA WATER MULA SA 13 DEEPWELLS TUTUTUKAN NG NWRB!

SINIMULAN na ng Manila Water na patakbuhan ang labing-tatlong deepwells sa iba't ibang lugar sa nasasakupan nito. Nito lamang Marso 27, higit sa 15 na milyong litro ng tubig kada araw (MLD) na ang karagdagang supply na nakukuha mula sa mga deepwells at tinatayang mas marami pang supply ng tubig galing sa deepwells ang madaragdag sa mga susunod na buwan.

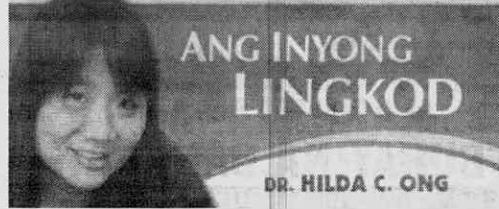
Bago pa man patakbuhan ang bagong deepwells, higit sa 9 MLD na supply ang nangagaling mula sa limang deepwells sa Curayao, Rodriguez. Inaasahang aabot sa 30 MLD ang supply na mangagaling sa mga deepwell sa katapusan ng Marso ngayong taong ito.

Sa kasalukuyan, aabot sa 100-150 MLD ang kinakailangang karagdagang supply ng Manila Water para sa mga kostumer nito kumpara sa alokasyon na 1600 MLD na nakukuha nito mula sa Angat Dam. Bukod sa mga deep-

well, sinisikap ng Manila na mapunan ang dagdag na pangangailangan sa supply sa pamamagitan ng Cardona Water Treatment na ngayon ay nagbibigay na ng 23 MLD. Nagsimula na ring makakuha ng dagdag na tubig mula sa crossborder flows ng Maynilad na ngayon ay umaabot sa 11 MLD.

Sa ngayon ay 97% ng mga kostumer ng Manila Water ang may tubig na sa loob ng 8-12 oras na umaabot sa unang palapag ng mga kabahayan. Patuloy pa ring isinasagawa ang mga operational adjustments at network solutions tulad ng paglalagay ng line boosters at paglalagay ng mga karagdagang linya upang mas maging tuloy-tuloy ang supply ng tubig sa mga malalayo at matataas na lugar na sineserbisuhan ng Manila Water.

Ayon kay Dr. Sevilleo D. David Jr., Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), 97% ng "raw water" na nagmumula sa



DR. HILDA C. ONG

Angat Dam ay ginagamit sa Metro Manila at ng magsasaka para sa patubig sa 28,000 hectares ng bukiran sa Bulacan at Pampanga, 2% ginagamit sa flood control at 1% sa ground water.

Nagbigay ng pahayag ang Monitoring and Enforcement Division, Engineer Gino Mangosing, "ang pagkuha ng tubig sa pamamagitan ng mga hinukay na deep wells ay ipinagbabawal na sa buong Metro Manila gayundin sa ilang bahagi ng mga lalawigan ng Bulacan (Guiguinto, Bocaue, Marilao at Meycauayan) at Cavite (Dasmariñas), samantalang kinakailangan ng kaukulang permiso mula sa NWRB para sa ibang bahagi ng bansa."

Pinayagan ng NWRB ang pansamantalang pagkuha ng karagdagang tubig ng Manila Water mula sa 13 deepwells upang maresolba ng Metropolitan Waterworks and

Sewerage System (MWSS) ang hindi natin maintindihang hanggang ngayon, ano nga ba ang totoong problema ng Manila Water (east water concessioner ng MWSS)?

Wala naman water shortage, kung titingnan natin ang pinakahuling ulat ng Hydrological Information ng Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC), nasa 194.77 meters ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam noong March 27, 2019 (8:00AM), kulang ng 17.23 meters base sa 212 normal high water level (NHWL). Humigit pa sa Minimum Operating Water Level (MOWL) of 180 meters.

Tuwig ika-15 at bago magtapos ang buwan ng Abril at Mayo, ang NWRB ay magsasagawa ng inspection at pagmonitor at sa mga strategic areas, water discharge, water quality ng drinking water nakukuha mula sa deep wells.

ANG INYONG LINGKOD

Disclose contingency plans to address water crisis, MWSS urged

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) and other concerned agencies will disclose to the

public their contingency plans should Angat Dam in Bulacan breach its critical level in April. Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian,

who chairs the Senate economic affairs committee, yesterday said there have been formal recommendations for cloud seed-

ing in Angat but there should be contingency plans should such a move be insufficient to fill up the dam, which supplies about

90 percent of Metro Manila's water requirements.

"As early as now we should assure the public that should the water level in Angat Dam reach critical level because of the El Niño, the government is prepared for that eventuality and we already have contingencies in place to ensure there will be adequate supply of water," he said.

He reminded MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco to submit the official list of waterworks projects in the pipeline between now and 2023, when the Kaliwa Dam project is expected to be completed. The government is banking primarily on Kaliwa Dam to shore up Metro Manila's water supply.

"What is the strategy of the MWSS for the next five years? We want to face our constituents and be able to tell they can be calm because these projects are coming in," Gatchalian told Velasco during the recent Senate committee on public services hearing on the Metro Manila water shortage.

Based on the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services (PAGASA)'s computation, the water level in Angat Dam may reach its critical level by the end of April. The dam's water level is now at 195 meters, or 16.09 meters below its normal high level of 212 meters.

According to PAGASA, the dam will turn critical once it breaches the 180-meter mark.

PAGASA hydrologist Danilo Flores said the Angat water level drops by an average of 41 centimeters daily.

Laws on concessionaires

The water shortage brought about by "mistakes of Manila Water" highlights the need for laws governing concessionaires to be amended to pave the way for stiffer penalties every time they fail to comply with their mandate, lawyer Rico Paolo Quicho, first nominee of party-list Sulong Dignidad said.

"We need to add a provision imposing clear-cut penalties for concessionaires who fail to comply with the concession agreement," Dignidad said.

The MWSS admitted in congressional hearings that its hands are tied when it comes to penalties that can be imposed on concessionaires that fail to comply with distribution agreements.

"As it stands, the MWSS and its regulatory office don't know what penalties it can impose on erring concessionaires," he said, following the government agency's admission it cannot impose penalties not stipulated in the concession agreement.

"Having access to water is a basic human right. We need to have safeguards in place to make sure that the water

shortage experienced by many around the metro will not happen again," Quicho added.

While the Ayala-owned Manila Water has not been handed down a penalty yet, the company imposed a one-time waiver on minimum charges for all its affected customers in Metro Manila and Rizal.

As of March 28, water service availability has been restored to 98.1 percent in Manila Water concession areas in the east zone.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Johnny Pimentel said the House of Representatives should investigate what he called "the lifeless performance" of a 30-year-old law that requires facilities for turning rainwater into water supply in case of drought.

"We actually have a 1989 statute that calls for the construction of rainwater harvesters in all barangays. But it seems that the execution of the law has been wanting," he said, referring to the Rainwater Collector and Springs Development Law or Republic Act 6715.

'Expedite public service act measure'

Meanwhile, lawmakers have been urged to expedite the approval of the proposed amendments to the 80-year-old Public Service Act (PSA) during the remaining two-week session of Congress next month to "break the barriers to investments and competition in certain industry sectors that hamper the country's sustained, broader and higher trajectory of economic expansion."

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, one of the principal authors of House Bill 5828 approved by the House in 2017, said the measure is pending in the Senate.

"The Senate has already approved on second reading its version of the measure. Tackling it would be the best use of the two weeks of sessions next May," Salceda said.

HB 5828 seeks to redefine the concepts of "public service" and "public utilities" in the old PSA law that are often interchangeably used by monopolies, duopolies and oligopolies to suit their purpose.

The legal redefinition of the terms, Salceda said, is a first "vital step" to new economic reforms that will usher in healthy competition in important industry sectors.

Quoting a recent World Bank study, Salceda said the Philippine economy has remained "highly concentrated compared to other countries in the region, which means less competition — and thus high prices, less jobs and value created."

The World Bank study said letting more players enter these vital industries could improve services, generate higher-paying jobs and, ultimately, hasten poverty reduction. — Paolo Romero, Delon Porcalla



China state firm eyed for Pasig River rehab

By Doris Dumlao-Abadilla
@Philbizwatcher

The Philippine government is keen on tapping state-owned Chinese infrastructure contractor China First Highway Engineering Co. Ltd. (CFHEC) to help rehabilitate the Pasig River system, a very polluted watercourse that cuts through the metropolis and ends in Manila Bay.

CFHEC, in collaboration with local proponents, is also among the parties seen interested to participate in a prospective Manila Bay reclamation project.

The Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) signed on March 22 a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with CFHEC to undertake a feasibility study for the full rehabilitation of Pasig River, an official statement said.

The feasibility study—including the requirements for the treatment of industrial wastewater and sewerage before draining to the water-

ways—will be undertaken by the CFHEC at no cost to the PRRC, the statement said.

Pursuant to the Build-Operate-Transfer Law under Republic Act No. 6957, as amended by RA 7728, the unsolicited proposal of the CFHEC will still be subject to the appropriate review and approval of the Philippine government through the conduct of a competitive challenge and in accordance to applicable laws and regulations.

The initiative is seen in line with President Duterte's directive to control the pollution of the Pasig River system and enhance its development in order to maximize its use for socioeconomic purposes.

The MOU, which outlines the potential benefits of the partnership for the Pasig River, was signed by PRRC executive director Jose Antonio Goitia and CFHEC general manager Hou Jianchao together with other PRRC and CFHEC officials.

"We can rightfully claim

that the President is ever supportive to the PRRC as manifested by his issuance of Administrative Order No. 16 last Feb. 19—giving particular roles for this Commission to perform in expediting the rehabilitation and restoration of the coastal and marine ecosystem of the Manila Bay," Goitia said.

PRRC deems CFHEC to have the capacity and track record for implementing engineering and construction requirements of public infrastructure projects, including water treatment, roads, transportation and commercial development, among other works.

"Today marks another momentous event in the histories of the PRRC and CFHEC, as both signify to participate in joint undertaking for the cause of attaining the requirements of the Pasig River Integrated and Strategic Master Plan (Prism)," Goitia added.

PRRC's mandate is to transform Pasig River and its envi-

rons into a "showcase of a new quality of urban life." Its overarching goal is to boost river water quality and make it viable for fishery, secondary recreation like boating or even transform it into a bulk water supply source for manufacturing processes.

The government last year said it was keen on privatizing the operations of the Pasig River ferry system, which is up for rehabilitation. The upgrade of the ferry service would open new stations along the river in the cities of Manila, Mandaluyong, Makati, Taguig, Pasig and Marikina.

The government is planning to build 29 stations servicing 76,000 commuters a day or 19.84 million a year, excluding passenger volumes for weekend schedules, tours or express routes. It also plans to put in place 24 air-conditioned boats with a 50-seat capacity each as well as a regular 15-minute interval for boats. INQ



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PRRC AND CHINA FIRST HIGHWAY ENGINEERING CO. LTD., SET VISION FOR PASIG RIVER DEVELOPMENT



Photo shows PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia and CFHEC General Manager Hou Jianchao, together with PRRC Operations Director Anshari C., Lomodag, Jr., and CFHEC's Business Managers Zhang Hanzhou and Liu Mengchen during the MOU signing

Consistent to the pronouncement of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and the mandate of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) to control the pollution of the Pasig River system and enhance its development in order to maximize its utilization for socioeconomic purposes, the PRRC entered into a partnership with the China First Highway Engineering Co., Ltd. (CFHEC), through a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation last March 22, at the Novotel Manila, Cubao, Quezon City.

"We can rightfully claim that the President is ever supportive to the

PRRC as manifested by his issuance of Administrative Order No. 16 last February 19, 2019 – giving particular roles for this Commission (PRRC) to perform in expediting the rehabilitation and restoration of the coastal and marine ecosystem of the Manila Bay," says Goitia.

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With the partnership in place, the bright future of the Pasig River development is beginning to unfold.



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Global landmarks go dark for Earth Hour

NEW YORK (AFP) – New York's Empire State Building, Egypt's pyramids, London's Big Ben and Rio's Christ the Redeemer statue were among the world's most renowned monuments plunged into darkness for an hour Saturday as part of a global campaign to raise awareness about climate change and its impact on the planet's vanishing plant and animal life.

The 13th edition of Earth Hour, organized by green group WWF, saw millions of people across 180 countries turn off their lights at 8:30 p.m. to highlight energy use and the need for conservation.

The event comes after some of the most dire warnings yet on the state of Earth's natural habitat and species.

"We are the first generation to know we are destroying the world. And we could be the last that can do anything about it," WWF said. "We have the solutions. We just need our ▶6

Global landmarks go...

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voices to be heard."

WWF-Australia CEO Dermot O'Gorman told AFP that "Earth hour still is the world's largest grassroots movement for people to take action on climate change."

"It's about individuals taking personal action but joining with hundreds of millions of people around the world to show that not only do we need urgent action on climate change but we need to be protecting our planet," he added.

Dozens of companies around the world said they would take part in this year's campaign, which also saw Singapore's skyline go dark and Hong Kong turn off the lights along Victoria Harbour.

In New York, the riverfront United Nations headquarters turned black, as did the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin and Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

Other global landmarks that flicked the switch included Sydney's Opera House, the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe in Paris, Dubai's Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest skyscraper – the

Acropolis in Athens, Shanghai Tower and the Kremlin building in Moscow.

WWF's own "Living Planet" report in October said 60 percent of all animals with a backbone – fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals – had been wiped out by human activity since 1970.

In Cali, Colombia, people lit candles to form a "60+" sign as part of the Earth Hour events.

Another study said a recent decline in bugs that fly, crawl, burrow and skitter across still water – fueled by deforestation, urbanization and the rise of commercial farming – was part of an unfolding mass extinction event, only the sixth in the last half-billion years.

Last year, Earth Hour was observed in more than 7,000 towns and cities in 187 countries, according to the organizers.

While the lights-off event is a symbolic gesture, Earth Hour has led successful campaigns over the past decade to ban plastics in the Galapagos Islands and plant 17 million trees in Kazakhstan.



Cities go dark for Earth Hour, bring light to climate change

NEW YORK (AP) — Cities around the world marked Earth Hour on Saturday by turning off lights at 8:30 p.m. local time in a call for global action on climate change.

Earth Hour, spearheaded by the World Wide Fund for Nature, calls for greater awareness and more sparing use of resources, especially fossil fuels that produce carbon gases and lead to global warming. Beginning in Sydney in 2007, Earth Hour has spread to more than 180 countries, with tens of millions of people joining in.

The Empire State Building participated as clocks hit 8:30 p.m. on the US East Coast with a dimming of the skyscrapers' lights.

In Hong Kong, major buildings along Victoria Harbor turned off their non-essential lights and the city's popular tourist attraction known as the Symphony of Lights was canceled.

Over 3,000 corporations in Hong Kong signed up for Earth Hour 2019, according to the WWF Hong Kong website.

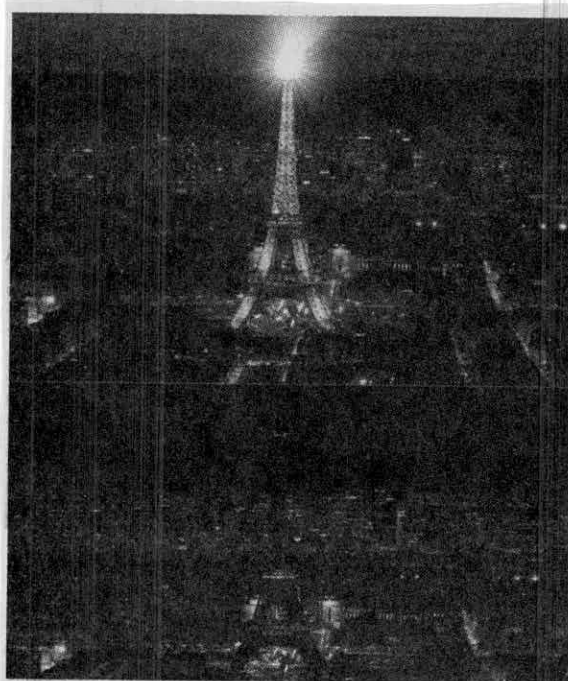
Iconic skyscrapers including the Bank of China Tower and the HSBC Building in Central, the city's major business district, switched off their lights in response to the global movement.

The City of Lights also turned off the Eiffel Tower's nightly twinkle to mark Earth Hour.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo dimmed the lights Saturday on the city's most famous monument for an hour.

In Italy, public buildings and historical monuments in 400 cities participated in Earth Hour. Lights were also switched off at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

Some of most emblematic architectural treasures in Spain participated, including the Alhambra palace in Granada and Barcelona's La Sagrada Familia basilica.



Photos show the Eiffel Tower, illuminated in Paris and switched-off during Earth Hour organized by the green group WWF.

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CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS

**WORLD'S LANDMARKS PLUNGED
INTO DARKNESS FOR EARTH HOUR**

NEW YORK—New York's Empire State Building, Egypt's pyramids, London's Big Ben and Rio's Christ the Redeemer statue were plunged into darkness for an hour on Saturday as part of Earth Hour.

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People can do something

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More PH establishments join Earth Hour -- Loren

WITH more and more establishments and households turning their lights off every year, Senator Loren Legarda said the Philippines has shown capability of taking steps to protect the planet in observing the annual Earth Hour.

Earth Hour which started in Sydney, Australia, is being held every March 30 from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. encouraging to turn off their lights to conserve energy.

"Every year, nations, communities, industries, and individuals participate in the Earth Hour, switching off non-essential lights for an hour. This shows that we are all capable of taking action to protect the Earth and act

against climate change in our own individual way," said Legarda, Chair of the Senate Committee on Climate Change and UNISDR Global Champion for Resilience.

Last year, 188 countries and territories participated and more than 17,900 landmarks and monuments around the world switched off their lights during Earth Hour.

"The Earth Hour proves that we can be protectors of our planet. It shows that small acts, when put together, create big change. I hope that what we can go beyond Earth Hour and imbibe environment-friendly practices as a way of life," she added.

Marlon Purificacion



Environmentalism's danger



FROM WHERE
I STAND
ERIC
JURADO

EARTH Hour came and went. Media were filled with headlines about the coming end of the world because of climate change. However, a graver danger faces us. The danger is not from global warming, pollution, plastic, or the logging of rain forests, as environmentalists would have us believe. The danger to us is from environmentalism itself.

The fundamental goal of environmentalism is not clean air and clean water; rather, it is the demolition of technological/industrial civilization. Environmentalism's goal is not the advancement of human health, human happiness, and human life; rather, it is a subhuman world where "nature" is worshipped like the temple of some primitive religion.

Environmentalists have made "development" an evil word. They inhibit or prohibit the development of offshore drilling, oil and gas, nuclear power—and every other practical form of energy. Housing, business, and jobs are sacrificed to endangered animals. Medical research is sacrificed to the "rights" of mice. Logging is sacrificed to the "rights" of trees. No instance of the progress that brought us out of the cave is safe from the onslaught of those "protecting" the environment from us, whom they consider as rapists and despoilers by our very essence.

Nature, they insist, has "intrinsic value," to be revered for its own sake, irrespective of any benefit to us. As a consequence, we are to be prohibited from using nature for our own ends. Since nature supposedly has value and goodness in itself, any human action that changes the environment is necessarily immoral. Of course, environmentalists invoke the doctrine of intrinsic value not against wolves that eat sheep or beavers that gnaw trees; they invoke it only against us, only when we want something.

The ideal world of environmentalism is not 21st century Western civilization; it is the Garden of Eden, a world with no human intervention in nature, a world without innovation or change, a world without effort, a world where survival is somehow guaranteed, a world where we have mystically merged with the "environment." Had the environmentalist mentality prevailed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we would have had no Industrial Revolution, a situation that consistent environmentalists would cheer—at least those few who might have managed to survive without the life-saving benefits of modern science and technology.

The expressed goal of environmentalism is to prevent us from changing our environment, from intruding on nature.

That is why environmentalism is fundamentally anti-human. Intrusion is necessary for human survival. Only by intrusion can we avoid pestilence and famine. Only by intrusion can we control our lives and project long-range goals. Intrusion improves the environment, if by "environment" one means our surroundings—the external material conditions of human life. Intrusion is a requirement of human nature. But in the environmentalists' paean to "Nature," human nature

"We need to return to a philosophy of reason and individualism, a philosophy that makes life on earth possible."

is omitted. For environmentalism, the "natural" world is a world without us. We have no legitimate needs, but trees, rivers, and bacteria somehow do.

They don't mean it? Heed the words of the consistent environmentalists. "The ending of the human epoch on Earth," writes philosopher Paul Taylor in *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, "would most likely be greeted with a hearty 'Good riddance!'" In a glowing review of Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*, biologist David M. Graber writes: "Human happiness [is] not as important as a wild and healthy planet... Until such time as Homo sapiens should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along." Such is the naked essence of environmentalism: It mourns the death of one whale or tree but actually welcomes the death of billions of people. A more malevolent, human-hating philosophy is unimaginable.

The guiding principle of environmentalism is self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of longer lives, healthier lives, more prosperous lives, more enjoyable lives—the sacrifice of human lives. But we, as individuals are not born in servitude. We have a moral right to live our own lives for our own sakes. We have no duty to sacrifice it to the needs of others and certainly not to the "needs" of the nonhuman.

To save us from environmentalism, what's needed is not the appeasing, compromising approach of those who urge a "balance" between our needs and the "needs" of the environment. To save us requires the wholesale rejection of environmentalism as hatred of science, technology, progress, and human life. To save us requires the return to a philosophy of reason and individualism, a philosophy that makes life on earth possible.

eric.jurado@gmail.com



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Mga SM Mall nakiisa sa 'Earth hour'

NAKIISA ang mga higanteng SM Mall sa Cavite sa selebrasyon ng pandaigdigang 'Earth hour' kung saan ang lahat ay nakiisa sa pag 'switch off' ng kani-kanilang mga ilaw sa mall, mula alas-8:30- 9:30 kamakalawa nang gabi.

Nagsimula ang annual event ng Earth Hour noong 2007 sa Sydney, Australia bilang pagbibigay halaga sa nature at environment ng ating planeta na unti-unti nang nasisira.

Sama-samang nakiisa ang mga mall, business establishment, household, religious sector at iba pa, sa simbolikong pag-switch off ng mga ilaw na magpapaalala sa kalahagahan ng kalikasan sa buhay ng bawat tao sa mundo.

Naging tema ng selebrasyon ngayong taon ang "diversity of life" na binibigyang halaga ang mga buhay na bahagi ng kalikasan na dapat nating pangalagaan at pahalagahan. **(Rossel Calderon)**



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Earth Hour, luyang dilaw at tubig-inumin

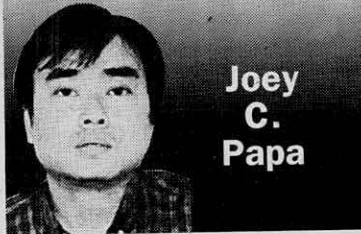
NATAPOS na ang taunang pagsasagawa ng Earth Hour kung saan ay nanawagan sa pagpapatay ng mga ilaw at ibang gamit de-kuryente sa loob ng isang oras. Ngunit maraming nagsabi na sa alinsangan, init ng panahon, mahirap patayin ang bentilador.

Ang sinabi naman daw ay 'yung mga hindi naman kailangang ilaw at kagamitang de-kuryente ang puwedeng patayin sa isang oras. May komputasyon ang pagpatay ng maraming ilaw sa loob ng isang oras kung ilan ang nabawas 'umano sa init ng mundo na likha ng mga fuel na nagpapatkbo ng mga planta para sa kuryente.

Ang isyu, pagkaraan ng isang oras at kahit na kasalukuyang idinadaos ang Earth Hour, gumagana pa rin ang mga coal-fired power plant o yaong mga plantang pinatatakbo ng mga coal at fossil fuel na kapwa galing sa ilalim ng lupa. Minimina ang mga ito at nauubos. Parang nabale-wala 'umano ang pagsasagawa ng Earth Hour. Tuloy-tuloy pa rin nga naman ang paglalabas ng usok ng mga plantang ito sa ating atmospera na patuloy na nagpapainit ng ating mundo (global warming) na nagdudulot ng pabago-bagong klima (climate change).

Sabi ng ilan, "at least" kahit papano daw ay may nabawas ng gamit ng kuryente. Ngunit ilan nga ba ang aktwal na lumahok sa Earth Hour? Ha-

BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey
C.
Papa

bang isinasagawa ito, ang krisis-trapik sa Edsa ay matindi! Panay ang buga ng usok-polusyon ng libo-libong sasakyan sa highway na ito at sa ibang panig ng bansa. At maraming taon na itong nangyayari.

Ang tunay na Earth Hour ay ang pagtitigil sa paggamit ng fossil fuel at coal at palawakin na ang paggamit ng renewable source ng enerhiya tulad ng araw, hangin at tubig. Hindi pa ito masama sa katawan at maililigtas pa natin ang Inang Kalikasan at mundo.

Napakainam naman talaga ang pag-inom ng maligamgam na tubig at salabat na luyang dilaw lalo na sa paggising sa umaga. Maraming taon na akong umiinom ng isang basong maligamgam na tubig pagkagising sa umaga. Hindi kami umiinom ng malamig na tubig. Kung mainit na mainit ng panahon, napakahusay ng malamig na tubig-inumin na galing sa banga o tapayan. Natural ito at hindi

pinalamig ng kuryente ng refrigerator. Tipid pa sa kuryente at mahusay sa buong katawan.

Hinuhugasan ng maligamgam na tubig ang loob ng katawan na tinadtad ng alat sebo sa maghapon pagkain. Nakatutulong ito sa metabolismo ng katawan na nagbibigay sigla sa maghapon paggawa. Lagi nating pinaliliguan ang katawan natin ngunit ang loob ng katawan ay hindi nahuhugasan ng maraming tubig. Nagpapasok pa nga ng kemikal sa katawan mula sa pagkain at mga bisyo.

Ang luyang dilaw naman ay puwedeng ipalit sa kape. Puwedeng maligamgam o natural na pinalamig bago inumin. Mahusay ito sa pamamaga at impeksyon. Sinasabi ring panlaban sa kanser ang regular na pag-inom ng salabat na luyang dilaw. Higit na mainam na purong salabat na luyang dilaw lamang at walang kahalang matamis na anuman. Kailangan ng ating katawan ang may tatlong litrong tubig-inumin sa buong maghapon tag-init man o tag-ulan. Maraming sakit ang nagmumula sa hindi pag-inom ng maraming tubig.

Sabi nga sa akin noon ng isang batang duktur mahigit sampung taon na ang nakalilipas, ang isang mahusay na gamot na libre naman o mura pa ay ang tubig. Maraming magandang idinudulot na kabutihan ang pag-inom ng maraming maligamgam o hindi malamig na tubig sa maghapon.

(bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



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AN HOUR OF DARKNESS FOR NATIONS TO SEE LIGHT

WORLD / A14

WITCH OFF Residents of Taytay, Rizal province, mark Earth Hour on Saturday night with battery-operated lamps arranged to indicate the number of minutes during which homes and businesses are to keep their electric lights switched off, in support of the global campaign to ease the effects of climate change and other man-made threats to the environment. —RICHARD A. REYES

Richard A. Reyes



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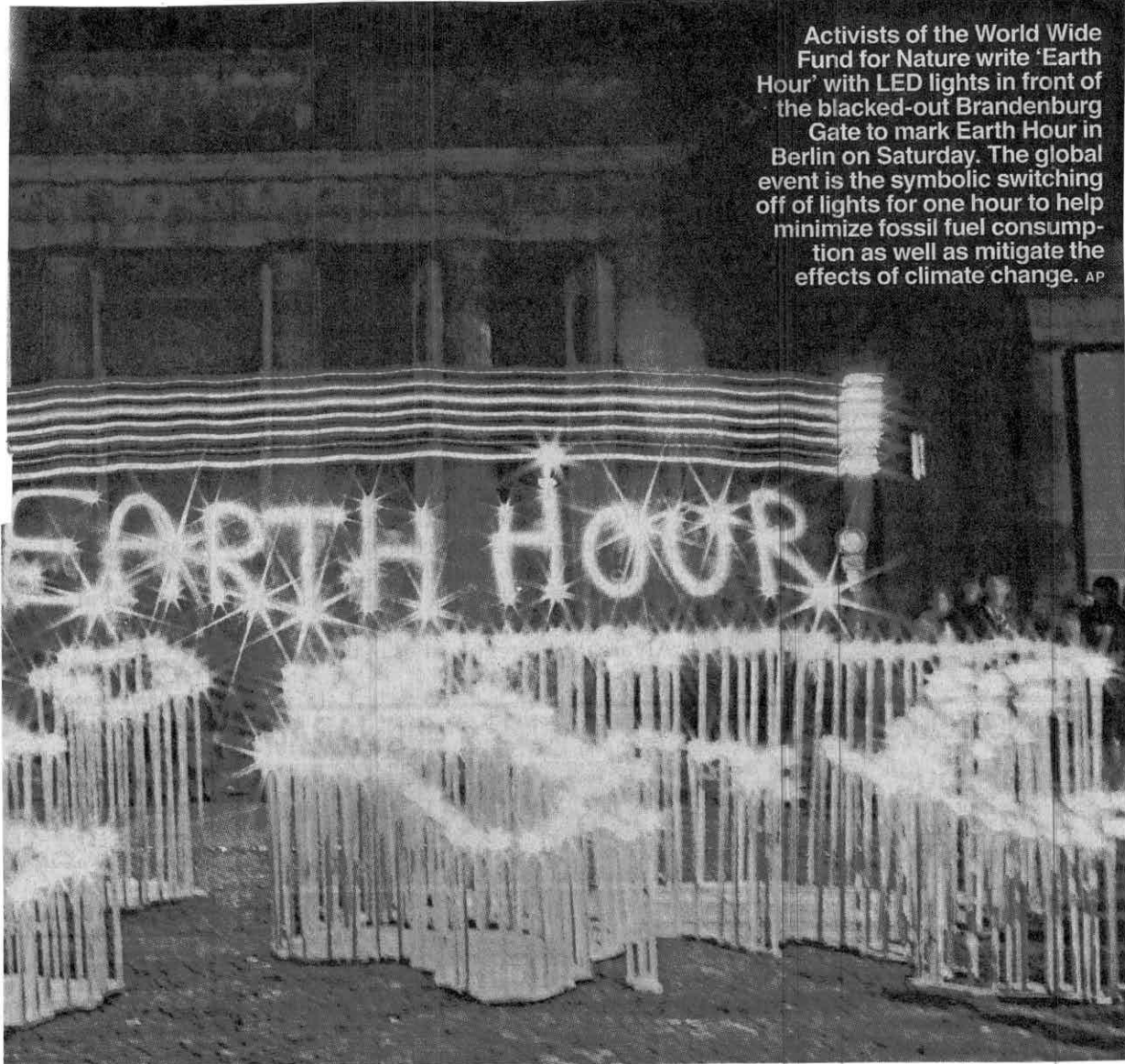


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Activists of the World Wide Fund for Nature write 'Earth Hour' with LED lights in front of the blacked-out Brandenburg Gate to mark Earth Hour in Berlin on Saturday. The global event is the symbolic switching off of lights for one hour to help minimize fossil fuel consumption as well as mitigate the effects of climate change. AP



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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CANDLE POWER - Candles are lit in a shopping mall in Consolacion, Cebu, as the lights go out during Earth Hour Saturday. (Juan Carlo de Vela)



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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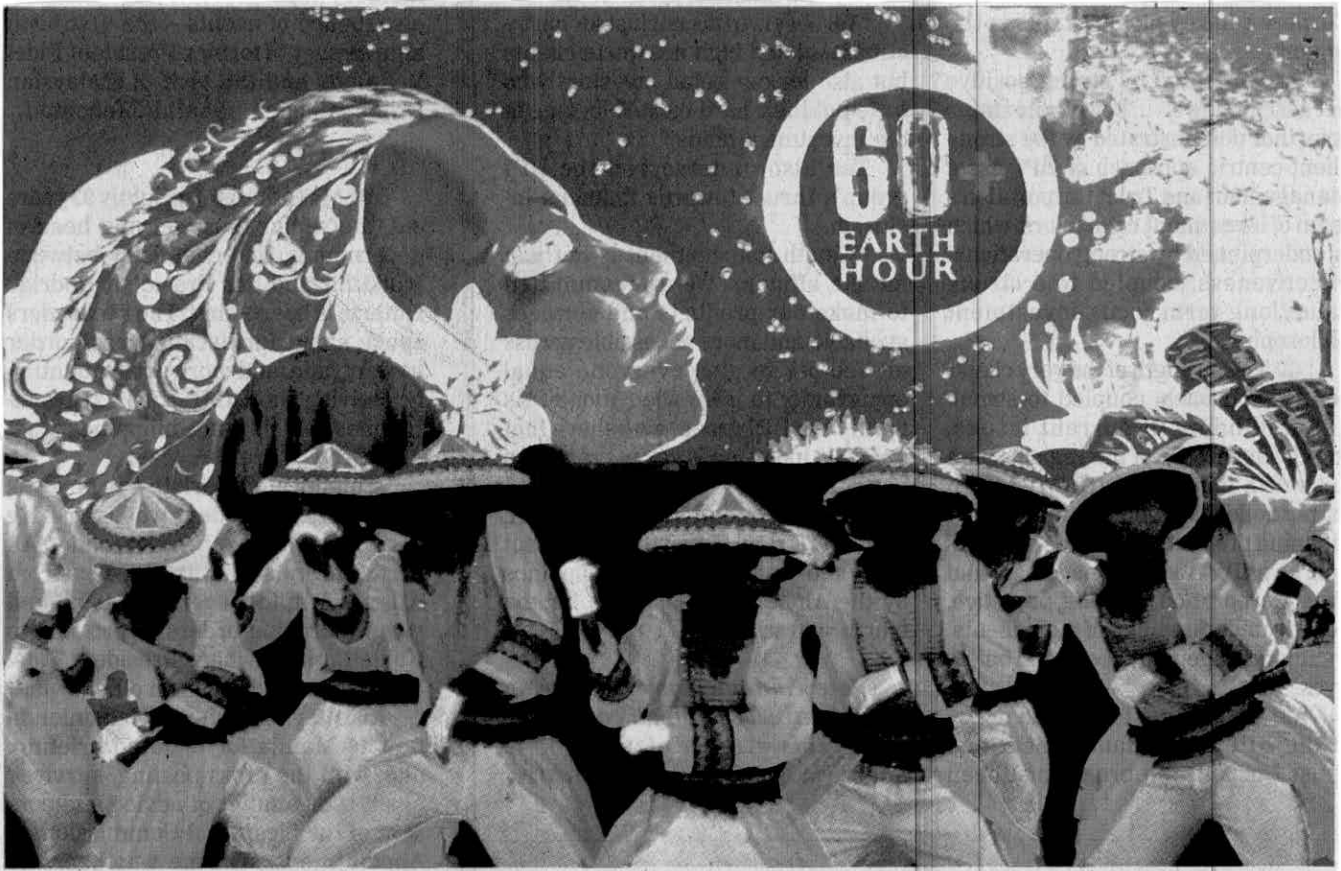
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EARTH HOUR DANCE – Students wearing neon-colored costumes that glow in the dark perform during the celebration of Earth Hour Sunday in SM Dasmariñas in Dasmariñas, Cavite. (Ali Vicoy)



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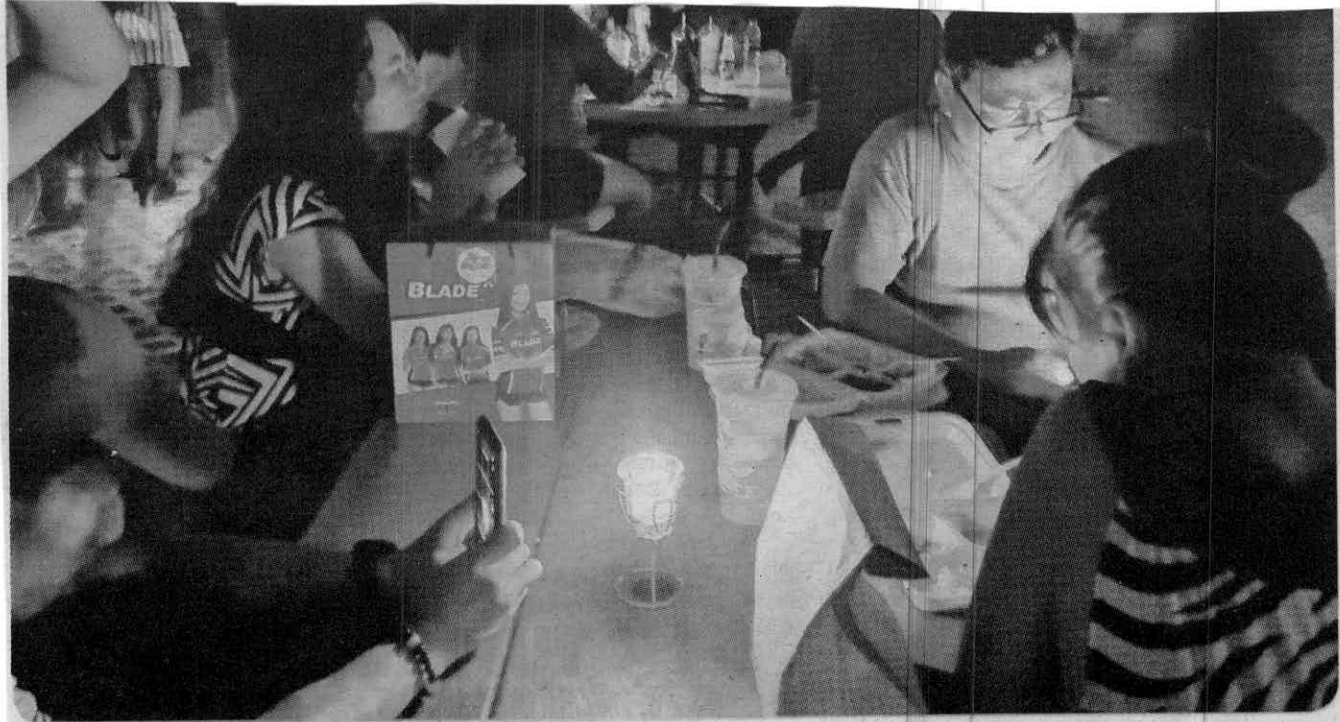
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KANDILA lang ang ginamit na ilaw ng mga kumakain na namamasyal sa isang park sa Crossing sa Mandaluyong City bilang pakikiisa sa Earth Hour noong Sabado ng gabi.
Kuha ni **RUDY ESPERAS**



Asean, EU empower youth leaders in conserving biodiversity

WE have to empower the young ones and inculcate love for biodiversity among them. They will be the stewards of the environment in the future," said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) executive director.

Twenty young and passionate advocates of biodiversity conservation from the Asean member-states were chosen to be part of the inaugural 2019 Cohort of Asean Youth Biodiversity Leaders (YBL). From March 25 to 30, the young leaders convened in Bangkok, Thailand, where they were trained on conservation policy frameworks and project management and communications skills, as well as build partnerships to strengthen their conservation efforts.

The ACB, through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in Asean Project supported by the European Union and Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, is spearheading the Asean Youth Biodiversity Programme (AYBP) in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network Southeast Asia, the official youth constituency to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

"Under the AYBP, the YBL program provides in-depth capacity building and mentorship to youth leaders in biodiversity in the region to strengthen youth-led implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and to mainstream youth considerations

to national biodiversity agendas," Lim said.

The kick-off workshop in Bang Pu Nature Education Centre, including a field trip to Khao Yai National Park, Thailand, set the foundation for the 2019 Cohort, and provided the young leaders with the skills and network to bring their conservation impact to the next level.

The workshop culminated with a Public Youth Forum and closing ceremony on March 30 at Berkeley Hotel Pratunam, Bangkok, Thailand.

The YBL program will be continued for the next two years rotating in Asean member-countries.

The 2019 YBLs are: Lin Ji Liaw (Brunei Darussalam); Porchhay Taing and Channimol Ky (Cambodia); Riansyah Sigit

Kurniawan and Nadia Putri Rachma Persada (Indonesia); Daophainh Inh Chanthavong and Fuevue Cherthai (Lao PDR); Kuhan Pillai Anbalakan, Mark Jun Liao, and Cheng Cheng Tan (Malaysia); Aung Than Oo and Shwe Yi Phoo (Myanmar); Mark Edison Reopta Raquino, Aubrey Jayne Padilla and Cirilo Aguardera Lagnason Jr. (Philippines); Karl Jun Qiang Png, Nathaniel Ling Wei Soon and Kittikun Saksung (Thailand); and Thong Van Pham and Yen Thi Hai Le (Vietnam).

As part of the AYBP, the search is on for the youth of Asean to be part of the first Youth Internship in Asean Heritage Parks. AHPs are the best protected areas in the Asean region with outstanding wilderness and biodiversity values.



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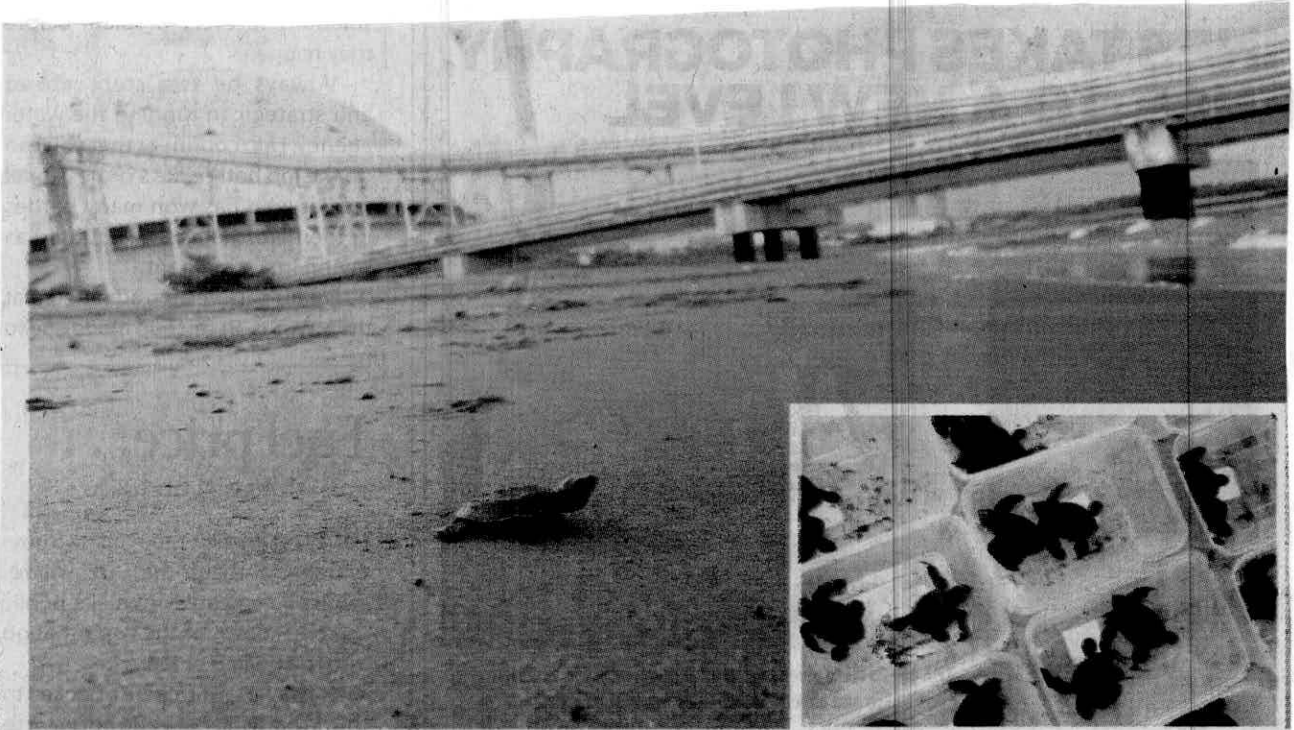
BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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TURTLE HAVEN One of 115 *pawikan* hatchlings from three sea turtle nests discovered in, of all places a coal-fired power plant, is seen on its way back to the sea. The release of the hatchlings (inset photo) was made by AboitizPower subsidiary Therma South Inc. The TSI has worked, since discovering the nests in December 2018, with various groups—including the team from the group's *pawikan* conservatory in Aboitiz Cleanergy Park in Punta Dumalag—to ensure that the nests inside TSI are well-protected and well-cared for. The sea turtle hatchlings released on March 29 emerged from an undiscovered third nest along the shore of the coal-fired power plant. PHOTO COURTESY OF ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES INC.



editorial

Colonies and colonizers: It's complicated

THIS past week, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico wrote to Spanish King Felipe VI and Pope Francis urging them to apologize for the abuses of colonialism and conquest.

"I have sent a letter to the king of Spain and another to the pope calling for a full account of the abuses and urging them to apologize to the indigenous peoples [of Mexico] for the violations of what we now call their human rights."

This is the response of the Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell: "Spain is not going to offer such an extemporaneous apology, just like we are not going to ask the French Republic to apologize for what Napoleon's soldiers did when they invaded Spain. Or like the French are not going to ask the Italians to beg forgiveness for Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul."

Both the letter and response were in Spanish.

The relationship between colonizing nations and former colonies is "complicated." Most former colonies have much of their culture and heritage rooted in their colonial period. Family names in the Philippines came from Spanish "ancestors" while Filipinos speak English by way of the Americans.

However, there is always that deep dark question of what the Philippines might be today if a typhoon sunk Magellan's ships before he reached Mactan Island.

Conceptualized in 2017, the BUSINESSMIRROR's "Mission: PHL" is a corporate social responsibility project. It serves "to generate public understanding and appreciation for nation and development aid partners that have helped the Philippine government in improving the lives and future of the Filipino people."

To that end, on Thursday, we will give recognition—in partnership with government agencies—to embassies, consulates, economic and cultural offices, and aid agencies.

Mission: PHL will give awards for individual categories as selected by various government agencies. These are Environment and Biodiversity Award (DENR), Science, Technology and Innovation Award (DOST), Agriculture and Fisheries Award (DA), Trade and Investments Award (DTI), Visit the Philippines Award (DOT), Infrastructure Support Award (DPWH), Education Award (DepEd) and Transportation Infrastructure Support Award (DOTr).

The "Embassy of the Year," "Aid Agency of the Year," and "Project of the Year" were selected by a panel that deliberated for over one year on nominations submitted by the foreign embassies. The members include Cristina Marie G. Aquino of the youth sector, Assistant Secretary Eduardo J. Malaya of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Officer in Charge Director Hazel Baliatan of the National Economic and Development Authority, coordinator Filomeno S. Sta. Ana III of the Action for Economic Reform Executive, Vice President of the European Chamber of Commerce Henry Schumacher, representing the private sector, Dean Jikyeong Kang of the Asian Institute of Management, representing academe, and columnist John Mangun for the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"Mission: PHL, Envoys & Expats Recognition Awards" would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Special Projects Director Psyche Roxas-Mendoza, managing editor of our sister publication, *Philippines Graphic*.

The awards are not a beauty contest with winners and losers. It is the recognition of a productive partnership between countries that understand the importance of a genuine community of nations.



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El Niño task force to prioritize water, food security

By CZERIZA VALENCIA

Water and food security will be top priorities in the immediate responses of the El Niño Task Force (ENTF) that is being reactivated, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)

said over the weekend. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) recommended to Malacañang on March 20 the full reactivation of the ENTF to be led by NEDA as well as the addition of water security among the

areas of concern. When the multi-agency task force was first convened during the 2015-2016 El Niño, the only areas of concern acted upon were food security, energy security, health and public safety.

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El Niño From Page 1

A memorandum order from the Office of the President is awaited to implement the recommendations of the NDRRMC.

Because of prevailing water supply issues, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said it would be more prudent at the moment to prioritize water security over energy security.

"As the popular saying goes, it is more difficult not to have water than not to have electricity," Pernia said in a briefing Friday.

"We will put water security above all else as suggested by Secretary Pernia," NEDA Undersecretary for regional development Adoracion Navarro said in the same briefing.

NDRRMC also recommended a review of the Roadmap for Addressing the Impacts of El Niño (RAIN) through a series of technical meetings of the ENTF.

"NEDA is ready to take a lead role in mitigating the effects of El Niño. We will also review and improve the RAIN to better suit the country's current conditions," Pernia said.

According to the official update of the weather bureau, this year's El Niño can be considered weaker compared with the 2015-2016 phenomenon. As of March 19, 16 provinces were found to already ex-

perience drought. This month, the count can be as high as 51 with most of the affected areas situated in Luzon.

The Department of Agriculture reported the damage to the agricultural sector has reached P4.35 billion from 149,494 hectares affecting 138,859 farmers and fisherfolk nationwide.

Affected regions are the Cordilleras, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao, Soccsksargen and BARMM.

For rice alone, damage has reached P2.69 billion affecting 111,851 hectares and production volume of 125,589 metric tons.

For corn, damage has increased to P1.66 billion affecting 37,642 hectares of lands with volume loss at 107,416 MT.

The DA said it continues to conduct field validation to assess the damage and losses, and monitoring of standing crops in areas at risk.

A total of P96 million in financial assistance from the DA's Agricultural Credit Policy Council has been allotted under the Survival and Recovery Assistance Program that will benefit 3,835 affected

farmers.

The processing of documents for areas declared under state of calamity due to El Niño - including Rizal, Occidental Mindoro, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay, Cotabato, Maguindanao and Negros Occidental - is ongoing.

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. has so far paid P43 million of insurance to 3,534 affected farmers in provinces in Ilocos, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao.

Damage control

As water security is a top priority in the expanded RAIN (E-RAIN), key interventions include the close monitoring of major dams and supply allocations alongside pressure management; deployment of water treatment facilities, tankers and static tanks; increased water extraction by Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) and private service providers; reopening of deep wells; and installation of rainwater collectors.

The National Irrigation Administration will also regulate dam water releases and ration irrigation supply.

The government will continue working with Manila Water in pressure management, deployment of mobile water treatment plants and water tankers, and coordi-

nating with Maynilad in the water-sharing scheme.

Also part of the short-term measures is the strengthening of the National Water Resource Board (NWRB) by converting it into the National Water Management Council (NWMC) which will be the apex body for managing water resources.

This will address the fragmentation of regulation in the water sector by harmonizing regulations.

An executive order for the creation of the NWMC is in the works, according to Pernia.

"There is a need for an apex body that will oversee the overall planning, programming and policy formulation based on sound data. We should also cite the gaps in water services that remain despite the abundance of the resource and programs and projects for the sector," he said.

The long-term solution is to push for the creation of the Department of Water Resources that will ensure the sufficient allocation of water resources across sectors, Pernia said.

Senatorial candidate Samira Gutoc said the government should take full control and protection of the farmers, particularly in Mindanao, against the adverse impact of the prevailing El Niño phenomenon.

"What is happening to Cebu, now placed under a state of calamity because of the



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drought, should not happen to Mindanao and other parts of the country for that matter. The government should take proactive steps to protect our farmers," Gutoc said.

Gutoc, who hails from war-ravaged Marawi City, said Mindanao currently accounts for 15 percent of the country's gross domestic product and 40 percent of agricultural production.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) earlier warned of drier and warmer conditions in the country this month due to El Niño.

The weather bureau said 51 provinces or 61 percent of the country may experience drought while 32 other provinces can be under the dry spell by the end of April.

The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office of Cebu has placed the entire province under a state of calamity due to the effect of El Niño on crops.

Ana Liza Solis, chief of PAGASA's Climate Impact Monitoring and Prediction Section, said the country is likely to experience a prolonged dry season this year.

PAGASA officially declared the onset of the dry season on March 22.

On the other hand, the United Nations weather agency identified Typhoon Ompong

(Manghkut), which crossed the Philippines in September last year, to have contributed to economic losses, worsened food insecurity and malnutrition.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO)'s State of Climate report said Ompong was associated with losses in crops and fisheries that put the Philippine population's food security at risk.

"Disruption to agricultural production affected the country's food supply for the following months, while the loss of livelihood for farmers and fisherfolk during the September-October harvest worsened the food insecurity and malnutrition," the report said.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said WMO's latest report on global temperatures, extreme weather and climate change indicators and socio-economic impacts is "yet another strong wake-up call" on the need for more ambitious climate action.

According to the report, exposure of the agricultural sector to climate extremes is threatening to reverse gains made in ending hunger and malnutrition.

"New evidence shows a continuing rise in world hunger after a prolonged decline," it said.

- With Louise Maureen Simeon, Helen Flores, Pia Lee-Brago

'It's like standing on hell'

39 degrees Celsius heat in Occidental Mindoro takes deadly toll on farms, potable water supply

By **Maricar Cinco**
@maricarcincoINQ

Household taps in Occidental Mindoro have run dry as intense heat continued to ravage farms and water sources in the province prompting an agriculture official to raise fear that the worst was yet to come, and a mayor to liken the heat to standing on top of hell.

"We don't have a water source, like dams, so the only source, even of potable water, is the river," said Romel Calingasan, agriculture officer of San Jose town.

"But even the river has already dried up, as in nothing flows anymore," he said.

Residents of San Jose have formed groups, or "clusters" to install manual water pumps and share their yield.

Others collect drinking water from towns which continued to have water.

Irony

Calingasan said all that's left of Busuanga River, which used to supply water to households and farms, was its rocky bed.

It was ironically the same river, which lies between San Jose and the town of Rizal, that had swelled in 2018 during a storm and flooded many communities.

Farmer Amalia Manahan, 37, said crops on 1 hectare of her 3-



But even the river has already dried up, as in nothing flows anymore

Romel Calingasan
Agriculture Officer

ha farm had dried up "beyond recovery."

"I'm just hoping we could still harvest at least some of the remaining vegetables," she said.

State of calamity has been declared in San Jose and Rizal as the dry spell was projected to linger for at least two months.

Next to hell

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (DRRMC) of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) region said more than 6,000 farmers lost income and 9,000 ha of farms were drying up.

"It's really hot now," said San Jose Mayor Romulo Festin. "It's like we're standing right above hell," he added.

Festin said municipal government officials had started distributing fuel for pumps to be used to extract water from deep wells.

Long wait

Some farmers, he said, had started looking for jobs in construction sites to earn a living after losing their crops to the heat.

Tony Gerundio, regional director of the Department of Agriculture, said 3,000 farmers had been recommended for a cash-for-work program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

"Even spring wells are dry," San Jose agriculturist Calingasan said. "If there's water, it lasts for up to only two weeks," he added.

Residents, he said, dug wells as deep as 10 meters but nothing much came out of these.

To conserve whatever water was left, Calingasan said farmers' groups implement "flashing," or rationing.

"It takes about five to seven days before your farm gets your turn again for water," he said.

The problem, Calingasan said, was that crops at this time

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ALL THAT'S LEFT A drone shot of Busuanga River in Occidental Mindoro shows water receding since the start of drought in February. —PHOTO FROM SAN JOSE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

were at their reproductive stage, which required a huge amount of water to survive.

“So assuming they survive this season, the yield will still not be that much,” he said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, in recent meetings with the local government of San Jose, said the average heat index in the town alone had reached 39 degrees Celsius, or at least 7 degrees more than the town’s normal average heat index of 32 C during summer months. In comparison, a person with high fever normally clocks a body temperature of 38 C.

Record heat

Calingasan said this surpassed the highest recorded heat index of 36.2 C in San Jose in 2016, also an El Niño year.

He said there was no longer enough pressure to pump water through shallow tube wells to household taps.

“There are just a few of drops of water coming out of our faucets,” Calingasan said.

“When you open two faucets at the same time, nothing comes out anymore,” he added.

In Occidental Mindoro, the cost of damaged crops has so far reached P36.8 million.

The regional DRRMC estimated P59.8 million worth of agricultural losses in Mimaropa. INQ



Farmers, fisherfolk bear P4.35-B loss from El Niño

FILIPINO farmers and fisherfolk have now incurred losses of P4.35 billion—from the initial P150 million—with an estimated production volume loss of 233,066 metric tons (MT) due to the El Niño climate phenomenon, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The latest report released by the DA-Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Operations Center (DRRM-OpCen) showed the hotter weather from what has been described as a “weak El Niño” has damaged 149,494 hectares of farms and affected 138,859 farmers and fishermen.

The rice sector accounted for 61.84 percent of the total reported damage as it incurred losses amounting to P2.69 billion, the DA reported.

About 108,845 farmers planting rice on 11,851 hectares in 37 provinces, with an estimated total output of 125,590 MT, were affected by the El Niño.

Damage to the corn sector has climbed to P1.66 billion with reported volume production losses of 107,417 MT in 37,643 hectares of farms. About 30,014 corn farmers were affected by the unfavorable weather condition.

The report indicated that the weak El Niño has already affected 14 regions, with the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) suffering the highest production losses,



“I think by definition, this is a weaker El Niño phenomenon. The spending for the event will be lower than during 2015 and 2016. [As for] the impact on GDP, we will have to do some more pencil pushing to come up with better guesstimates...Agriculture only accounts for 8 to 9 percent of gross value added of GDP.”—Pernia

as it accounted for 31 percent of the total damage reported.

Interventions

THE report also indicated P95.875 million worth of financial assistance has been allotted by the Agricultural Credit and Policy Council (ACPC) under its Survival and Recovery Assistance Program. About 3,835 El Niño-affected farmers are expected to benefit from the said amount.

“The processing of documents for areas declared under State of Calamity due to El Niño [Rizal, Occidental Mindoro, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay, Cotabato, Maguindanao, Negros Occidental] are ongoing,” the report read.

Furthermore, the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) has already paid P43.083 million in indemnities to 3,534 affected farmers in Regions 1, 3, 4A, 6 and 10.

SEE “EL NIÑO,” A2

“An amount of P18.3 million was released for cloud-seeding operations to RFOs [regional field offices] and Philippines Air Force,” the report added.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) expects this year’s mild El Niño to have no significant impact on GDP as well as inflation, and thus cost the government less on interventions.

In a briefing last Friday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia told reporters the impact on GDP will be minimal, considering that the agriculture sector only accounts for about 8 to 9 percent of GDP growth. The farm sector is expected to bear the brunt of El Niño’s impact this year. Initially, Neda Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning Carlos Bernardo O. Abad Santoss said the estimate is that the weather phenomenon will cut about 0.2 percentage points off of GDP growth. But this estimate has been factored in on the latest growth target adjustments made by the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC).

“I think by definition, this is a weaker El Niño phenomenon. The spending for the event will be lower than during 2015 and 2016. [As for] the impact on GDP, we will have to do some more pencil pushing to come up with better guesstimates...Agriculture only accounts for 8 to 9 percent of gross value added of GDP,” Pernia said.

The Roadmap for Addressing the Impacts of El Niño (RAIN) will cost less than the P19 billion spent on interventions when the last El Niño hit the country in 2015 and 2016, according to Neda Undersecretary for Regional Development Adoracion M. Navarro.

Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas



Dagdag Balita

'Pinas, kumikilos sa climate change

Nanawagan si Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. ng agarang aksiyon para maresolba pagresolba sa mga isyu sa klima (climate issues) sa United Nations High-Level Meeting on Climate and Sustainable Development for All na idinaos sa General Assembly ng United Nations sa New York, kamakalawa.

"If climate action does not measure up to what is needed, we all face the same fate of diminished existence or extinction altogether," ani Locsin.

Binigyang-diin ni Locsin na nagsasagawa ng mga epektibong programa ang Pilipinas upang malampasan ang climate change, at kailangan din itong aksiyon ng major carbon-emitting countries.

"If the most capable and able will not do more to slow and halt climate change, most will eventually stop talking about it and let climate change run its full and fatal course," aniya.

Bella Gamotea



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Free land, free hand



ANTEROOM
Eduardo Martinez

COMMENTARY

“
*Laws
are prospective
in nature.*

Farmer X continuously cultivates the land he has been occupying for a number of years. Sadly, he has no title to it. Under Commonwealth Act (CA) 141 (The Public Land Act), he can, upon application, be given a free patent by the government. A free patent is grant of land by the Republic

of the Philippines to deserving tillers of the soil, as long as they possess the qualifications prescribed by that law. But once granted, the grantee, like Farmer X, for instance, cannot dispose of the land within five years from issuance of the free patent. Also, any disposition after said five years up to 25 years shall be subject to approval of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or DENR. (Section 118, CA 141) Any disposition, encumbrance or transfer within those periods in violation of the law is considered invalid. In addition, corporations, associations or partnerships are generally proscribed from acquiring these free patents save under circumstances mentioned by the law. (Section 121, CA 141). Why you may ask is there such a restriction? Anyway the land was already awarded to the deserving farmer. Should he

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Free land, free hand

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not be given a free hand in doing whatever he pleases to it? Well, the purpose of the law is to ensure that the applicant farmer does what he does best. That is to continue cultivating the land which is the very purpose it was awarded to him in the first place. In fact, assuming the grantee, for one reason or the other, properly disposed of the land, he can actually get it back within five years from conveyance. (Section 119, CA 141). This is to protect the farmer and keep the land agricultural, in consonance with the award given to him. And mind you, these prohibitions are strictly imposed. The DENR religiously monitors this and carefully assesses intended sales of parcels of agricultural land under free patent. If it does not pass the mandate of the law, the office thumbs down the transaction.

This law cures whatever irregularities past transactions may have had and makes them good, valid and binding.

But it seems that quite recently, our framers of the law have recognized the move from agricultural to other purposes land may be used for. Just last 22 February 2019, Republic Act (RA)

11231 came into effect. Known as the “Agricultural Free Patent Reform Act,” its declared policy is “to remove the restrictions on free patents to allow the efficient utilization of these lands in order to contribute to wealth creation, entrepreneurship and economic development.” (Section 2, RA 11231). Thus, “agricultural public lands alienated or disposed in favor of qualified public land applicants ... shall not be subject to restrictions imposed under Sections 118, 119 and 121 ... regarding acquisitions, encumbrances, conveyances, transfers or dispositions. Agricultural free patent shall now be considered as title in fee simple and shall not be subject to any restriction on encumbrance or alienation.” (Section 3, RA 11231). In stark contrast to CA 141, RA 11231 completely does away with all the stifling restrictions discussed earlier above imposed on the grantee. Farmer X can, right after the grant, actually enter into a commercial transaction with a corporation and enter into a joint venture project with the latter for a purpose other than agricultural. Build a high-rise mixed-use condominium tower maybe? Or he may simply sell the land to any interested buyer who will no longer continue to till the land. No need to wait for five years.

No need to seek the nod of the DENR. Yes, that is now possible.

I guess this move is in recognition of the fact that the Philippines has greatly progressed.

Wait there’s more. You may think that the law will apply only to transactions after its effectivity. After all, laws are prospective in nature. But RA 11231, by express provision, states that it “has retroactive effect and any restriction regarding acquisitions, encumbrances, conveyances, transfers or dispositions imposed on agricultural free patents issued under Commonwealth Act 141... before the effectivity of this Act shall be removed and are hereby immediately lifted.” (Section 4). This law cures whatever irregularities past transactions may have had and makes them good, valid and binding.

I guess this move is in recognition of the fact that the Philippines has greatly progressed. Agricultural land can be converted and devoted to other uses that will make a better and even more robust economy. Yes, all for the betterment of the country; all for its greater advancement. That is the way to go. Way to go Philippines!



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

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ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY

HATE PLASTIC? JOIN NATGEO RUN

The country's only pro-environment race will hold its biggest campaign yet as it joins the global call to ban harmful plastic items during the 10th Earth Day Run on April 14 at Mall of Asia grounds.

Presented by National Geographic, the race is expecting at least 15,000 participants in the 21-kilometer, 10 km, 5 km, 3 km and 500-meter Doggie categories.

Even paper cups are banned to avoid littering. Instead, organizers encourage runners to bring their own containers or the reusable water bottles included in the race kits.

Studies show that Asia accounts for more plastic waste leakage than the rest of the

world. Yearly, oceans end up absorbing nine million tons of plastic wastes that, according to marine experts, take 450 years to disintegrate.

Previous race beneficiaries include the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Abuan watershed in Isabela, victims of SuperTyphoon "Yolanda" and the Tawbuid Mangyan tribes in Mindoro.

Andrew Neri of race organizer RunRio said the Doggie run, the final category that starts 7 a.m., is limited to 300 slots and will allow humans to bring puppies no younger than four months. Vaccination records must be presented.

—ROMINA S. AUSTRIA INQ