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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Bacuit Bay polluters face imminent closure—DENR

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonmayuga](#)

BUSINESS establishments found polluting Bacuit Bay face imminent closure as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) vowed to leave no stones unturned in rehabilitating beach resorts in El Nido, Palawan.

As such, the fate of Sea Jane Resto Bar in El Nido, Palawan, now hangs in the balance as the DENR Region 4B, or the Mimaropa region, investigates the establishment for allegedly directly discharging untreated wastewater to Bacuit Bay.

The DENR is now conducting a laboratory test on the effluent samples taken from the company's septic tank. Should it fail to meet the water quality standards set by the DENR, the company will be ordered closed, officials of the DENR said.

On April 11, the DENR discovered that the restaurant's sewage treat-

ment facility was leaking through a large hole and was releasing black and foul-smelling liquid directly into El Nido's Bacuit Bay.

The discovery was made through the ground penetrating radar (GPR) scanning led by a team from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau-Central and Mimaropa regional offices.

During the excavation, a portion at the beach area fronting Sea Jane Resto Bar was seen with black sand, indicating the potential source of the untreated discharge.

Filthy water gushed out when a park ranger from El Nido's Protected Area

Management Office dug deeper into the site using a shovel.

The backhoe from the municipal government of El Nido was used to continue the excavation, which later on revealed that the wastewater was indeed coming from a large opening underneath the flooring of the said establishment.

The owner of the establishment has committed to repairing their damaged septic tank.

Under the Clean Water Act, violators face a fine of up to P200,000 per day of violation, and with the issuance of a cease-and-desist order, the establishment may be ordered closed through the

concerned local government unit (LGU).

"We have to stop them, and all other erring establishments from polluting Bacuit Bay and from putting the lives and health of people at risk," DENR Mimaropa Regional Executive Director Henry Adornado stated.

Bacuit Bay encompasses the islands of El Nido in Palawan. It serves as a jump-off area for tourists going to the famous Big and Small Lagoons and Hidden Beach. Unfortunately, portions of the bay were contaminated with high coliform levels because of irresponsible discharge of wastewater coming from establishments and households.



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THE EXHIBENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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Step up bay cleanup as it continues to draw people

BASECO beach in Tondo, Manila, was filled with thousands of Manilans on Easter Sunday, out to enjoy even just a few minutes of wading in the cool waters of the bay on a specially hot summer day. They can no longer do this in the waters off Roxas Blvd. and Rizal Park, where wire fences keep the people from getting to the water and signs tell them the water is not safe for swimming.

The water in that part of the bay, especially near Remedios St. in Malate was found at one time to have a coliform bacteria level of 35 million MPN (most probable number). It seems there is a sewer nearby spewing untreated human and animal wastes into the bay. After the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) closed down the Manila Zoo and other polluting places in Malate, coliform levels went down in the area.

From 35 million MPN near Remedios St., the level went down to 11 million last February 11-15. From 7.9 million MPN near Padre Faura, the level went down to 1.6 million. From 1.2 million MPN in the area behind the United States Embassy, the level went down to 1,700 MPN.

But the safe coliform level for swimming, the DENR said, is 100 MPN. This means the tested areas are still way above safe levels. Hence, the need for that wire fence along the entire length of Roxas Boulevard keeping people from wading into the bay.

Out on Baseco at the mouth of the Pasig River, a V-shaped compound northwest of the North Harbor, the water is probably cleaner as it is far from the sewers of Malate, and so the people feel safer as they wade out into the waters of the bay. But the entire Manila Bay is said to be polluted, as a result of decades of untreated wastes flowing into it through countless rivers in Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan, Metro Manila, and Cavite.

This is today the biggest challenge facing the DENR. It is a problem a hundred times bigger than Boracay. There is garbage of all kinds, including plastics that threaten sealife, but the principal concern is the pollution from millions of homes, farms, and factories, a problem which the Supreme Court ordered the government to solve as early as 2008.

People around the bay have long enjoyed its waters in the heat of summer. They can no longer do so in the highly populated areas of Manila because of the wire fences and the signs warning them of the pollution. There are yet no such fences and signs on Baseco island, and we hope the pollution level has not reached danger levels in that part of the bay.

But the DENR should extend its tests to all areas around the bay to protect the people who are not yet fully aware of the danger in the bay's waters. And it should carry on its cleanup and rehabilitation program without letup in the next five years which, by its own estimates, will be needed to complete the task.



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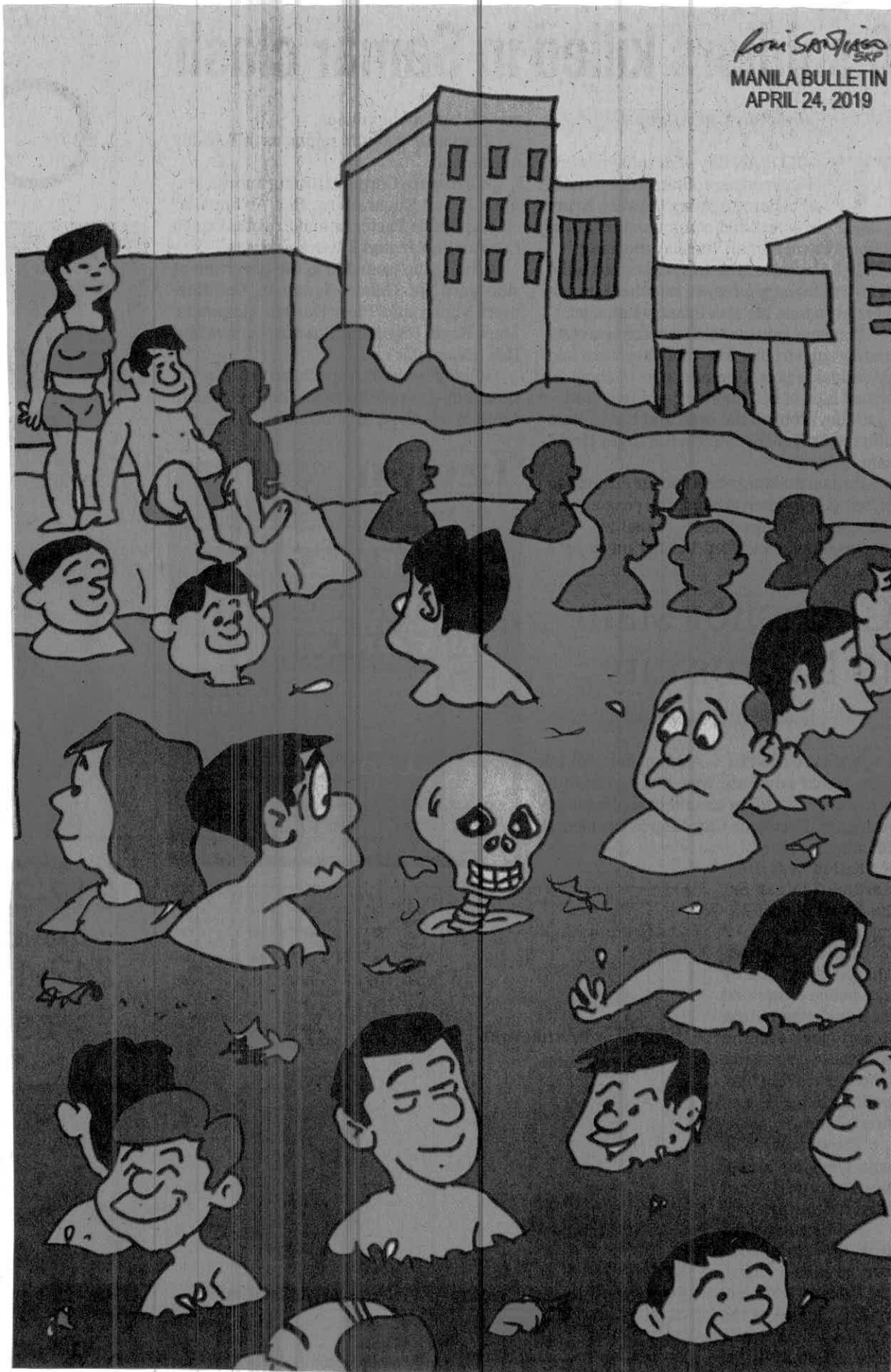
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EDITORIAL

Paigtingin ang Manila bay cleanup habang patuloy ang pagdayo ng mga tao

NAPUNO ng libu-libong taga-Maynila ang Baseco beach sa Tondo, Maynila nitong Linggo ng 1 Pagkabuhay, upang maranasan kahit ilang minuto lamang ang pagtatampisaw sa malamig ng tubig ng look lalo na sa napakainit na panahon. Hindi na nila ito maaaring gawin sa katubigan ng Roxas Blvd. at sa bahagi ng Luneta, na binakuran na upang maiwasan ang pagpunta ng mga tao sa tubig kasama ng mga panuto na nagsasabing hindi pa ligtas para paglanguyan ang tubig.

Ang tubig sa bahaging ito ng look, partikular malapit sa Remedios St. sa malate ay nadiskubrenghang mayroong coliform bacteria na umaabot sa 35 milyong MPN (most probable number). Posibleng may alkantarilya malapit sa bahaging ito na naglalabas ng mga dumi ng tao at hayop sa look. Matapos isara ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang Manila Zoo at iba pang lugar na nadudulot ng polusyon sa Malate, bumababa na ang lebel ng coliform sa lugar.

Mula 35 milyong MPN malapit sa Remedios St., bumaba ang lebel sa 11 milyon nitong Pebrero 11-15. Mula 7.9 milyong MPN malapit sa Padre Faura, bumaba ito sa 1.6 milyon. Mula 1.2 milyong MPN sa bahagi ng Embahada ng United States, bumaba ang lebel sa 1,700 MPN.

Ngunit ang ligtas na coliform level para sa paglalangoy ayon sa DENR, ay 100 MPN lamang. Nangangahulugan ito na malayo pa sa ligtas na lebel ang mga sinuring lugar. Kaya naman, kinakailangan talaga na harangan ang kahabaan ng Roxas blvd. upang maiwasan ang pagpunta ng mga tao sa look.

Sa Baseco, sa bunganga ng Ilog Pasig, na isang "V-shaped" na komunidad sa hilagang-kanluran ng North Harbor, maaaring mas malinis ang tubig lalo't malayo ito sa mga alkantarilya sa Malate, kaya naman palagay ng mga tao ay mas ligtas dayuhin ang tubig sa bahaging ito ng look. Gayunman, sinasabing 'polluted' ang buong Manila Bay, na resulta ng ilang dekada pagdaloy ng maruruming tubig na nagmumula sa 'di mabilang na mga ilog sa Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan, Metro Manila, at Cavite.

Ito ang pinakamalaking pagsubok na kinakaharap ngayon ng DENR. Isa itong problemang daang beses na mas malaki kumpara sa Boracay. Naroon ang iba't ibang klase ng mga basura, kabilang ang mga plastic na nagdadala ng panganib sa buhay ng mga laman-dagat, ngunit ang pangunahing suliranin ay ang polusyon na nagmumula sa milyon-milyong kabahayan, farm at mga pabrika, problemang ipinag-utos ng Korte Suprema na solusyunan ng pamahalaan noon pang 2008.

Matagal na naranasan ng mga tao sa paligid ng Manila Bay ang pagtatampisaw sa tubig nito lalo na sa panahon ng tag-init. Hindi na nila ito ngayon magawa sa siksikang mga lugar sa Maynila dahil sa bakod at paskil ng babala ng polusyon. Wala pang ganitong harang at mga babala sa isla ng Baseco, at umaasa tayo na ang polusyon dito ay hindi pa umaabot sa mapanganib na lebel.

Gayunman, kailangang palawakin ng DENR ang pagsusuri nito sa lahat ng lugar na nasa palibot ng look upang maprotektahan ang mga tao na hindi pa lubos ang kaalaman sa panganib ng tubig ng look. At dapat ding magpatuloy ang paglilinis at programang rehabilitasyon sa lugar ng walang pagkaantala sa susunod na limang taon, base na rin sa pagtataya ng ahensiya, na kinakailangan upang mapagtagumpayan ang programa.



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Better e-waste management pushed

With electric and electronic wastes flooding countries at an alarming rate, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has urged for better waste management infrastructure and systems to deal with "the rapidly growing flows of e-waste in ways that advance decent work."

"Every stage of the reuse, recycling, refurbishing, resale" process, when it comes to technology "has to be looked

at in much more systematic ways," said Nikhil Seth, chair of the ILO Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the Management of Electrical and Electronic Waste.

The agency also noted that countries are also recognizing the crucial need to protect those working with toxic and hazardous e-waste, which negatively affects them and the environment.

According to the ILO, the world produces as much as 50 million tons of e-waste a year

and although it is valued at 55 billion euros, or more than \$60 billion, only 20 percent of e-waste is formally recycled.

However, it is becoming an increasingly important resource for in the informal work sector as along the e-waste value chain, they recover, refurbish, repurpose and recycle electrical and electronic equipment, bringing innovative services and products to the market, aiding the whole "circular" recycling economy.

ENManuel



Who own the seas?

Last December I was sitting on a sea wall in San Juan, La Union, with one of my daughters when she suddenly shot the question: "Who owns the sea?"

My answer was automatic: No one.

"But I heard on the news China says it owns the sea."

That jolted me, because my daughter is all of 9 years old. I had to go into an explanation about the planet having many seas, and that countries claim seas as part of their territory, and that disputes come about with these territorial claims because the seas are so rich in resources.

Our conversation eventually went into private ownership of properties in front of the ocean. I explained that even if people buy such properties, they cannot claim ownership of the beach.



PINOY KASI

MICHAEL L. TAN

Last Holy Week, I was there again in La Union with my kids, and the beaches were swarming with people. Black Saturday was the peak, with families—no, clans—coming in and pitching tents for picnics on the beach, on the sea wall, on sidewalks.

I told my 9-year-old and her sisters: "See? No one owns the seas, or the beaches." But I just had to add: "And that can be a problem, too."

The next day, Easter Sunday, I took an early morning stroll with the three of them and our dog. In sharp contrast to the previous day, the beach was practically abandoned, but the crowds from the previous day left loads of garbage.

To entice the kids to stroll with me, I said we would look for marine life on the beach, and we would also pick up the garbage. That cleanup proved to be a science class, as the kids learned to pick up only the nonbiodegradables—plastics and Styrofoam at the top of the list.

I had to explain how plastics are now considered a major pollutant of the oceans, and how this affects marine life. The bags, drinking straws, spoons and forks and soft drink containers quickly filled up our garbage sack, but the kids soon learned about a less known plastic, tiny but terrible: cellulose acetate used to make cigarette filters.

It is amazing how many people go to the beach to enjoy nature, then smoke and stub out the cigarettes right there in the sand. I'll chalk it up to not knowing any better about the plastic in the filter, meant to reduce the cigarette polluting the smoker's lungs but ending up polluting the beaches and the seas.

I was amazed at how much Styrofoam there was, mainly as food containers. But this beach cleanup also made me realize another major source for the Styrofoam waste: the cheaper floating boards used for kids and people who can't swim. The boards break easily, and people just leave them on the beach.

After about half an hour, an older daughter, aged 12, shouted out in exasperation: "Doesn't anyone care?"

Later that day, we had lunch at a more popular beach area in Urbiztondo, which was full of people but had a garbage-free beach. There were signs everywhere that said "No Smoking, No Eating, No Drinking, No Littering," along with trash receptacles. The tourists were more upper class here.

I felt torn, all the more when the 12-year-old daughter said she didn't want to go back to the other beach, which she said was "dirty." Last year, when we were in Mariveles, Bataan, the kids were in despair, and when they returned from a drive around the public beaches, they said all were filled with garbage, including the ocean. There was only one beach that was clean, and it was private.

People deserve more public beaches, where they don't have to pay an arm and a leg for expensive food and accommodations. But people also need to learn to take responsibility for the beaches. The upper classes are not necessarily more responsible; they stay in more expensive places that hire people to keep the places clean.

I worry that San Juan, discovered for its surf only a few years ago, might deteriorate faster than Boracay. People from all socioeconomic classes are cashing in, but as resources dwindle, it'll be the poor who will lose out first.

One La Union native told me there are people who just buy land and wait for prices to move up, then sell when they see overtourism. There will always be new places to invest in.

It's important to get the young to think about these issues: It's their beaches, their seas, their world that we're squandering away.

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PUSONG PANALO

ni Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II

ITO AY isang mahalagang tanong na dapat nating itanong sa ating sarili araw-araw. Kaugnay pa rin ng pagdiriwang ng Earth Day noong isang araw ay isinagawa ng National Geographic ang taunang Earth Day Run noong ika-14 ng Abril. Planeta o plastik? ang tema ng aktibidad na ito at layon nitong iparating sa mas marami ang mahalagang impormasyon tungkol sa polusyon

na sanhi ng plastik.

Layunin din ng kampanya na mabawasan ang dami ng single-use na mga plastik na ginagamit ng tao at naitatapon sa ating karagatan. Halimbawa ng single-use na mga plastik ay ang lalagyan ng tubig, sachet ng kape, shampoo, sabon, mga balutan ng chichirya, at marami pang iba. Mayroong pandaigdigang panawagan na itigil na ang paggamit ng mga

ito sapagkat lubhang nakapipinsala sa ating kapaligiran.

Maraming tao sa buong mundo ang tumugon na sa panawagang ito. Marahil ay panahon na rin upang ating tignan ang sarili nating pag-uugali o nakasanayan patungkol sa paggamit ng plastik araw-araw. Pilitin nating makapag-ambag sa pangkalahatang kampanya para mapangalagaan ang ating kapaligiran.

Hinihikayat ang mga Asyano, bukod sa lahat, upang tumugon

PLANETA O PLASTIK?

sa panawagan sapagkat ayon sa mga pag-aaral, ang mga bansa sa Asya ang pinakamaraming itinatapon basurang plastik kumpara sa pinagsama-samang basurang plastik ng lahat ng bansa sa labas ng Asya. Limang bansa sa rehiyon ang pinagmumulan ng 55-60% ng 9 na milyong tonelada ng basurang plastik na nauuwi sa mga karagatan. Ayon ito sa pag-aaral ng Ocean Conservancy.

Ang mga plastik na basurang nasa dagat ay mananatili rito sa loob

ng 450 na taon, o mas matagal pa. Malaking panganib ang dala nito para sa mga hayop sa dagat na maaaring sumabit dito, makakain nito, o mapatay ng mga piraso ng plastik sa dagat. Ayon sa mga eksperto, lalo pang lumalala ang problema. Kaya't nananawagan ang iba't ibang sektor sa publiko upang tumulong na maisalba ang marine ecosystem ng ating planeta.

Ipagdiwang natin ang ating kapaligiran, mahalina at alagaan natin ito. Nag-iisa lamang ang ating tahanan.



BASURA NG CANADA IBABALIK NI DUTERTE

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Basura ng Canada ibabalik ni Duterte

Binigyan ng isang linggo ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang gobyerno ng Canada para kunin pabalik ng kanilang bansa ang basurang itinapon sa Pilipinas.

Sa situation briefing sa Provincial Capitol sa San Fernando, Pampanga, sinabi ng Pangulo na may hanggang sa susunod na linggo ang Canada para hakutin ang mga basurang itinapon sa bansa.

Kapag aniya hindi kinuha ang basurang itinapon sa bansa ay siya mismo ang magpapadala sa mga ito sa Canada sakay ng barko.

“Yung basura ng Canada, I want a boat prepared and give a warning to Canada maybe next

week that they better pull that thing out or I will set sail doon sa Canada ibuhos ko ‘yang basura nila doon,” anang Pangulo.

Hindi maintindihan ng Presidente kung bakit itinapon ng Canada ang kanilang basura sa bansa ng sunod-sunod at ngayon ay nakatambak sa ilang lugar sa Central Luzon.

Sinabi ni Pangulong Duterte na kapag nagmatigas ang mga ito ay aawayin aniya nito ang Canada

“Awayin natin ang Canada. We will declare war against them. Kaya man natin ‘yan sila. Isauli ko ‘yan talaga. Ikarga mo ‘yan sa bar ko and I will advise Canada that

your garbage is on the way, prepare a grand reception. Eat it if you want to,” dagdag ng Pangulo.

Galit ang Pangulo dahil kinakaya-kaya aniya ng Canada ang Pilipinas at hindi siya papayag sa ganitong trato sa mga Pilipino.

Idinagdag pa ng Pangulo na aatasan niya ang Bureau of Customs na ibalik ang basura sa Canada kahit ayaw ng mga ito.

Ang ibang basura aniya ng Canada na nakatengga sa bansa ay ibuhos sa Canadian embassy.

Ang basura ay dinala sa Pilipinas sa halos 100 container van na pinadala mula Hunyo 2013 hanggang Enero 2014. **(Aileen Taliping)**



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Balita

ANG NANGUNGUNANG PAHAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANSA



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2 dayuhan, viral sa paglilinis sa Bora

BORACAY ISLAND - Viral ang litrato ng dalawang babaeng dayuhan na namulot ng basura sa baybayin ng Boracay.

Ayon kay Natividad Bernardino, head ng Boracay Inter Agency Rehabilitation Management Group, ito ay dapat tularan upang maibalik ang ganda ng isla.

Aniya, sa ngayon ay nasa 60 hanggang 70 porsiyento pa lamang ang natatapos sa rehabilitasyon.

Jun N. Aguirre



Iwasan ang grassfire ngayong panahon ng tag-init

HINIKAYAT ng Environment and Natural Resources Office (ENRO) sa Ilocos Norte ang mga lokal na residente, partikular ang mga nakatira sa bulubunduking bahagi, na tumulong upang maiwasan ang pagsiklab ng grassfire ngayong panahon ng tag-init.

Sa pagbabahagi ni Estrella "Baby" Sacro, project manager ng Barangay Ranger Officers, nitong Sabado, sinabi niyang nagkaroon ng insidente ng grassfire nitong mga nakalipas na taon at maaari itong maiwasan gamit ang tamang mga pamamaraan sa pag-akyat ng bundok.

Sa Ilocos Norte, ilang local government units kabilang ang mga bayan ng Piddig at Carasi ang mahigpit na nagbabantay sa mga komunidad at pinaaalalahanan ang mga nakatira doon sa epekto ng grassfire sakaling manalasa ito sa lugar.

Ayon kay Sacro, malaki ang inilaan ng pamahalaan para sa National Greening Program ngunit mawawalan ito ng sagsay kung patuloy na sisirain ng mga tao ang kabundukan.

"We have been conducting a lot tree planting activities while taking care of our remaining forests. We enjoin everyone to observe discipline and respect Mother Nature which nurtures our daily needs," pahayag ni Sacro sa isang panayam.

Paliwanag ng isang fire officials, halos 95 porsiyento ng mga nagaganap na wildfire ay dulot ng mga aktibidad ng tao.

Pinayuhan din ni Sacro ang mga tao na gamitin ang mga dumi ng sakahan bilang pagkain ng hayop o gawin itong organic fertilizer sa halip na sunugin ang ito.

Habang mas pinaiiigting ng mga opisyal ng DENR ang pagbibigay ng kaaalaman sa mga tao, bumubuo naman ng mga fire brigades sa bawat komunidad upang pamahalaan ang mas maayos na komunikasyon kasama ng mga awtoridad sakaling magkaroon ng totoong insidente ng sunog.

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Human chain formed vs Negros coal plant

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BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: About 7,000 Catholics of the Diocese of San Carlos from Manapla, Negros Occidental and La Libertad town in Negros Oriental held hands to form a human chain to renew their protest against the construction of a coal-fired power plant in this northeast city.

Fr. Edwin Laude, diocesan rector, said 45 parishes under the Diocese of San Carlos participated in the human chain that started at 8 a.m. and lasted for 30 minutes on Monday.

"Each parish committed to bring 500 to 1,000 people to the event. They covered the 229-kilometer distance between Manapla to La Libertad," Laude said.

He added that they estimated they would reach even 30 percent of their target participants, mostly from the youth sector, for the event that marked their celebration this year of Earth Day.

Rodne Galicia, convenor of the

Living Lau Dato Si Philippines, said the activity was "a show of force of the community about their concern for the environment. We are happy that the Diocese of San Carlos under Bishop Alminaza have expressed [its] resolve to oppose the plan."

He said their actions would continue even after the elections on May 13

Laude was optimistic that the activity and others planned "would be able to conscientize our leaders, our decision makers to listen to the people not to pursue the construction of the coal-fired power plant."

Alminaza called on voters dur-

ing his homilies not to vote for candidates who are supporting the coal-fired power plant project.

But Laude admitted that the people of San Carlos City view the matter from a different perspective.

"Most of the people here are dependent on the local government units and politicians. They cannot free themselves from that because they rely on them for employment," he said, adding that it would still depend on the people if they wanted to heed the bishop's call.

The residents only hope the *Sanggunian Panlalawigan* (Provincial Board) of Negros Occidental would "uphold the Executive Order (EO) issued by outgoing Gov. Alfredo Marañon Jr. declaring the province as coal-free."

Laude said Vice Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson, former three-term mayor of San Carlos City, had declared he was "open to the idea of the coal-fired plant."

"We are very much wary of his statement because there is no as-

urance that he would obey the EO. We are afraid he might revoke it," he added.

SMC Global Power Corp. expressed its intention to develop a 300-megawatt coal-fired power plant in the city.

The city council had already concurred with the resolutions of the two would-be host *barangay* (villages), Punaw and Palampas, expressing openness to the project.



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FULL CIRCLE Parishioners join nuns and priests in forming a human chain in front of the San Carlos Borromeo Church in San Carlos City to express their opposition to the proposed coal-powered plant in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITOY TANO





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Harness power from the sun to limit global warming

In celebration of World Meteorological Day last March 23, Senator Loren Legarda urged public and private sector leaders to support initiatives and technologies that can harness the power from the sun, as an alternative and renewable source of energy, in order to limit global warming and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Legarda, UNISDR Global Champion for Resilience, said that the event, which carried the theme "The Sun, the Earth, and the Weather" for this year, commemorated the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the contribution of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in monitoring the Earth system in order to deliver daily weather forecasts and advise policymakers on climate variability and change.

"We have immense access to the power from the sun, but we are not utilizing its energy as an alternative to fossil fuels. We have seen solar energy initiatives from other countries and even in some parts of our cities and communities, but we need to push this further in order to allow cleaner and cheaper energy to dominate our power mix," Legarda said.

Legarda expressed that, according to the WMO, the Sun's energy output has not increased and that long-lived green-

house gases in the atmosphere drive the increase in global temperatures, which are melting ice and heating our oceans and causing climate change that puts at risk public health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth.

She also mentioned that countries have committed to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit it to below 1.5°C through the Paris Agreement, but at the rate of emissions from greenhouse gas, global temperature is expected to rise to 3°C to 5 °C by 2100.

Legarda noted that the country already has the laws and strategies in place to promote and pursue cleaner sources of energy, but that greater participation from the private sector and stakeholders is needed to fully implement them and realize the country's potential for renewable energy development.

"Harnessing solar energy and other cleaner and renewable sources of energy is our only recourse to limit global warming and mitigate climate change impacts. The government must further collaborate with the private sector to accelerate low carbon investments, innovations, and technologies towards a sustainable future for the country and the world," Legarda said. - Office of Sen. Loren Legarda, Senate of the Philippines



Poll bets told to disclose environmental agenda

AS the country prepares for the national and local polls in May, the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) has called on all political candidates to push for balanced policies to manage the country's natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

"As the Philippine electorate prepares to wield its power to bestow a new mandate for the legislature and local governments, we challenge our senatorial and local candidates to state your agenda to address the most urgent environmental challenges of the land," PBEST Convener Carmelo Bayarcal said in a news statement.

Balanced policies mean that the stewardship of the environ-

ment and economic development should not be in conflict. There is a middle ground approach to harnessing the development of the potential of our natural resources that do not compromise the environment," he added.

As such, PBEST challenged candidates to disclose their agenda on environmental sustainability.

"For the longest time, environmental concerns have only been cursory and novelty platforms for political candidates and existing regulations are softly enforced. But the issue of environmental protection has now become an urgent discussion worldwide that we cannot afford to be left out," Bayarcal said.

"The repercussions are real, and we are starting to feel them.

The sooner we and the candidates realize that the environmental agenda is fundamentally linked to other 'conventional' election issues such as power, water, food security, and even job creation, the sooner we can make development sustainable," he said.

The group said recent disruptions such as erratic water supply, food inflation due to precarious supply, intermittent power interruptions and natural disaster are all linked to the environment because they resulted from people's wanton disregard for the protection and care of nature and its inhabitants.

"Climate change has exacerbated the repercussions of mankind's historic pursuits of progress often to the neglect of the environment," PBEST said.

Bayarcal said true prosperity comes from the sustainable use of natural resources. "We cannot talk of prosperity if it is unsustainable. It should be clear to all of us by now that natural resources are not infinite. All talks of progress and economic growth will not be possible nor make sense if we do not address the sustainability of these initiatives," he said.

Bayarcal said investors are also looking for sustainable growth of the economy. "Imagine investing so much on infrastructure only to be marred by a lack of power supply, or inviting foreign investors only to drive them away by the rise in the cost of doing business as a result of imbalanced supply and demand," he said. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



Report bares crisis in global trade of 'recyclable' plastic

A NEW report by the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) with data analysis on the global waste trade from Greenpeace East Asia revealed that water contamination, crop death, illness and open burning of plastic waste have all flooded into Southeast Asia, along with the world's so-called recycled plastics.

"Plastic waste from industrialized countries is literally engulfing communities in Southeast Asia, transforming what were once clean and thriving places into toxic dumpsites. It is the height of injustice that countries and communities with less capacity and resources to deal with plastic pollution are being targeted as escape valves for the throwaway plastic generated by industrialized countries," Von Hernandez, the global coordinator of the Break Free from Plastic movement said in a news statement.

Greenpeace East Asia collated import-export data from the 21 top exporters—with the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Japan at the top—and 21 top importers of plastics scraps to measure changes to the flow of "recyclable" plastic waste before and after China's 2018 foreign waste import ban.

Meanwhile, GAIA's field investigations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand detailed illegal recycling operations and crime syndicates, open burning, water contamination, crop death, and a rise of illness tied to environmental pollution that has led citizens to protest and governments to rush in restrictions to protect their borders, with many following China's lead with import bans.

According to Greenpeace East Asia, data indicates that Southeast Asia's current plastics crisis is the pinnacle

of a global experience, with waste piling up globally and domestically for all countries involved, even among former exporters.

Across the board, plastic waste exports dropped almost 50 percent, from 12.5 million tons in 2016 to 5.8 million tons in 2018 based on available data from January to November 2018.

Because plastic manufacturing is projected to rise, the drop in exports in part means recyclable plastics will continue to stockpile or head for improper disposal at home, the study revealed.

However, even the export of this waste doesn't ensure proper disposal, GAIA and Greenpeace East Asia said.

"Today, exports make their way into any country without adequate regulation to protect itself. North Sumengko, Indonesia, for example, turned into an international dumping ground almost overnight, and GAIA's field investigation found trash piled 2 meters high, makeshift dumps, and open burning in the farming community," they said.

Such process will continue until decisive action is taken, they said.

After China's import ban, waste flooded into Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand, who quickly set up import restrictions. Then, exports overflowed into Indonesia, India and Turkey.

"Once one country regulates plastic waste imports, it floods into the next unregulated destination. When that country regulates, the exports move to the next one. It's a predatory system, but it's also increasingly inefficient. Each new iteration shows more and more plastic going off grid—where we can't see what's done with it—and that's unacceptable," said Kate Lin, a senior campaigner with Greenpeace East Asia. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*