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IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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'Right to healthy environment should be in Charter'

By **ELIZABETH MARCELO**

Amid the worsening impact of climate change as well as the gravity of crimes committed against wildlife and the environment, former Supreme Court chief Reynato Puno said it is high time to include the right to a healthy environment in the Constitution.

During his keynote speech at a lecture on environmental justice held in Quezon City in mid-April, Puno underscored the need to "constitutionalize" the right to a healthy environment by including it in the Bill of Rights.

"The most effective way to protect the right to a safe and healthy environment is to constitutionalize the right in our Bill of Rights so that the right will be demandable," Puno said.

Organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the lecture was attended by over 100 participants from its regional offices and bureaus.

Puno said the government must also "rethink" its approach in addressing environmental crimes by first recognizing the right to a safe environment as a fundamental right.

"The Philippines, as a developing country, suffers more in the impact of environmental degradation, yet contributes less to its causes. The relationship between man and nature must be anchored on man's human rights," Puno said.

"We should rethink our philosophy in environment using human rights as the mandate. In fact, this philosophy should be cast in the Constitution, which cannot be tampered without the consent of the sovereign people," he said.

Puno led the 22-member consultative committee which drafted the proposed constitution in connection with administration's intended shift to a federal form of government. The draft constitution was submitted to President Duterte in July last year, though Puno had earlier stressed that the Concom is open to any possible amendments that might be proposed by Malacañang and Congress.

For his part, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the DENR continues to reorganize its field offices – from regional, provincial to community levels – to make them more effective in delivering services to the public.

Cimatu recently issued an administrative order delineating the roles and responsibilities of its field offices following the centralization of management functions at the regional level.

He said the rationalized structure of DENR field offices has resulted in "more coordinated and responsive regional directors."

Cimatu also cited the DENR's enforcement and legal teams for effective enforcement of environmental laws, especially in connection with the rehabilitation of Boracay and Manila Bay.

"The directors and staff also enabled an effective enforcement of environmental laws in curbing illegal logging, illegal mining, poaching and illegal trade of wildlife, and environmental pollution," he added.



DENR ENVIRONMENT LECTURE SERIES PINANGUNAHAN NI DATING CHIEF JUSTICE PUNO

NAGLUNSAD ng "lecture series" para sa kapaligiran ang Department of Environment and Natural Resource (DENR) na pinangunahan ni dating Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno na nagbigay ng kalamayan para sa environmental justice.

Ang kauna-unahang Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Distinguished Lecture Series ay ginanap sa Seda Vertis North Hotel na matatagpuan sa Quezon City noong Abril 15.

Malugod naming sinalubong ni Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu ang mahigit sa 100 participants na nagmula sa iba't ibang regional offices at bureaus sa ilalim ng DENR.

Sa kanyang lecture, binigyang-diin ni Puno ang kahalagahan para sa Pilipinas na isama sa batas ang pagkakaroon ng karapatan para sa malusog na kapaligiran sa pamamagitan ng pagsama nito sa Bill of Rights.

"The most effective way to protect the right to a safe

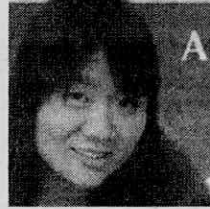
and healthy environment is to constitutionalize the right in our Bill of Rights so that the right will be demandable," sabi nito.

Ayon pa sa dating chief justice, napapanahon na para sa bansa na muling mag-ispip para sa pagbibigay ng kahalagahan sa kapaligiran kasabay ng pagtukoy nito sa mga hamon sa environmental crime at justice.

"The Philippines, as a developing country, suffers more in the impact of environmental degradation, yet contributes less to its causes. The relationship between man and nature must be anchored on man's human rights," pagdiin pa ni Puno.

Dagdag pa nito, "We should rethink our philosophy in environment using human rights as the mandate. In fact, this philosophy should be cast in the constitution, which cannot be tampered without the consent of the sovereign people."

Ayon naman kay Cimatu, patuloy ang DENR



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

sapag-reorganize ng kanilang field offices mulasa regional, provincial hanggang sa community levels upang maging epektibo sa pagbibigay ng serbisyo opubliko.

Kamakailan ay naglabas ng administrative order si Cimatu upang ipaalala ang mga tungkulin at responsibilidad ng bawat field offices kasabay ng pagkakaroon ng centralization ng management function sa regional level.

Aniya, ang ginawang "rationalized structure" sa DENR field offices ay nagresulta sa pagkakaroon ng koordinasyon at pagtugon ng mga regional directors.

Kasabay nito, sinabi pa ni Cimatu na ang pagkakaroon ng enforcement at legal teams ng DENR ay naging epektibo para sa pagpapatupad ng environmental laws particular na ang tungkol sa rehabilitasyon ng Boracay at Manila Bay.

"The effective enforce-

ment of environmental laws has been evident as the teams have made considerable impact on curbing environmental degradation in Boracay and, now, in Manila Bay," sabi ni Cimatu.

"The directors and staff also enabled an effective enforcement of environmental laws in curbing illegal logging, illegal mining, poaching and illegal trade of wildlife, and environmental pollution," aniya pa.

Ang lecture series na ito ay layuning pasiglahin ang kaisipan ng mga sumusupporta sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay at Boracay projects na inorganisa ng Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs.

Umaasa naman si Puno na maging daan ang lecture series na ito upang magamit ng mga "scholars" para sa mas malawak napag-intindi at pagresolbasa "environmental problems" ng bansa.



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Malaya Business Insight

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DENR, Nestlé tie up for NWLA

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Nestlé Philippines have entered once again into a partnership for the 2019 National Search for Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Schools.

Nestlé will sponsor the Nestlé Water Leadership Awards (NWLA), one of three special categories of the Search which will be conducted by the DENR, the Department of Education, and the Commission on Higher Education.

An agreement on the partnership was signed by Juan Miguel Cuna, DENR undersecretary for Field Operations and Supervising Undersecretary for the Environmental Management Bureau and Ernesto

Mascenon, Nestlé Philippines senior vice president and head of Corporate Affairs.

The NWLA, launched in 2013, is a biennial program which encourages and recognizes schools with exemplary initiatives in water conservation, efficiency, and protection.

The main criteria are based on the implementation of Deming's Cycle of Continuous Improvement (Plan-Do-Check-Act), ISO 14001, and ISO 14004.

By way of recognition, cash awards are provided to national and regional winners at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

"As an integral part of its business, Nestlé Philippines engages with society by ad-



(From left) Christine Garcia, Nestlé assistant vice president for Corporate Affairs; Mascenon; Cuna; and Vizmindia Osorio, officer-in-charge and assistant director, DENR-EMB.

dressing issues and concerns in the areas of nutrition, water and environment, and rural de-

velopment, where it is best able to make a positive difference," Mascenon said.



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Earth Day 2019 aims to end species extinction ^{1/2}

The Earth Day Network has identified 2019 as a crucial year to protect species from extinction. Working in partnership with thousands of organizations, EDN's global campaign seeks to advance policies and international agreements for species protection.

According to the network, the world today is facing the greatest rate of extinction since the loss of the dinosaurs over 60 million years ago. Unfortunately, this rapid loss is now caused by human activities including deforestation, pollution, hunting and unsustainable agriculture.

Over the past decades, the planet has experienced vast environmental degradation. Studies estimate that the earth is losing plant and wildlife species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the normal rate. Insect populations have dropped more than 45 percent worldwide, while 40 percent of the world's bird species continue to decline.

In the Philippines, environmental organization Haribon Foundation estimated over 10 fish species are in danger of being lost forever in the next 20 years due to overfishing and illegal fishing. This list includes the staple *talakitok* and *maya-maya*.

"The variety of life in the ecosystem or biodiversity is crucial to our survival and resilience as communities. Yet despite its fundamental importance, the world's biodiversity is being lost faster than ever," lamented

the foundation.

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List identified various plant and animal species that are at different risk levels in the country. For example, the *pili* nut, which can only be found in the Philippines has been considered vulnerable, which means it is facing high risk of extinction in the wild.

The *tawilis*, which is the only freshwater sardine in the world, has been in the headlines recently after reports of its steady population decline. It is now considered endangered due to overfishing, illegal fishing, and water quality deterioration.

The *pilandok* or the *Balabac* mouse deer, which may only be spotted in Palawan, has been categorized as endangered; it faces threats such as poaching, hunting and habitat destruction. Finally, the Philippine Eagle and the *Dulungan* or Rufous-headed hornbill continue to be classified as critically endangered, facing extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

"The good news is that the rate of



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extinctions can still be slowed, and many of our declining, threatened, and endangered species can still recover if we work together now to build a united global movement of consumers, voters, educators, faith leaders and scientists to demand immediate action," said Kathleen Rogers, president of Earth Day Network.

According to Haribon, restoring and protecting the homes of species are tantamount to ensuring their survival. Habitat restoration such as planting native trees like narra, *kamagong*, *talisay* and *antipolo* not only ensures there is a home for the country's biodiversity, it also builds greater stability against climate change. Enforcing strong legislation for protected areas and critical habitats is key to protecting species at risk as well as shared habitats.

The Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan envisions that "by 2025, biodiversity is restored and rehabilitated, valued, effectively managed, secured, maintaining ecosystem services to sustain healthy, resilient Filipino communities and delivering benefits to all."

Dateline Obando

The annual Philippine Earth Day Celebration, through the Earth Day

Network Philippines coalition in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, will be held on April 28 in Obando, Bulacan.

Last year, the local Earth Day event was conducted in Harbour Square at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex with the theme geared toward ending plastic pollution. This year's campaign focuses on raising awareness on the state of the country's biodiversity, and the important link between species and habitat protection.

The main activity will commence with a volunteer-led coastal cleanup drive in one of the island barangays of Obando. This will be followed by a simultaneous bike tour around the town area and a yoga session by ISKON.

The Sandiwang Festival, or the "Isang Diwa sa Pagdiriwang ng Kalikasan," will also be held, allowing various religious groups to express their faith and aspirations for the environment.

Different groups also get to showcase their environmental cause through an advocacy fair. Finally, a commitment signing will be held in support of transforming a barangay of Obando into a zero-waste community.



Panawagan ng DENR sa publiko **ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTEKTAHAN**

HINIKAYAT ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu ang publiko sa anumang maitutulong upang magsugpo ang bumababang bilang ng population ng mga endangered animal species.

“May obligasyon tayong pangalagaan ang ating planeta at ang Earth Day ang siyang tamang panahon para simulan ang mga maliliit na bagay na magagawa natin para maging kaaya ang lugar na ating tinitirhan, saad ni Cimatu.

Sa ginanap na 49th Anniversary ng Earth Day sa Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Nature Center Amphitheater sa Quezon City na may temang “Protect Our Species” sinabi ni Cimatu

na ito ay paalala para mapangalagaan ang ating planeta sa pagkakasira ng kalikasan.

Aniya, kailangan ang aktibong pakikipagtulungan ng bawat isa sa bumababang bilang ng mga endangered species sa bansa gaya ng Philippine monkey, flying lemur, giant flying fox at tarsier.

Binigyang diin ni Cimatu na ito ay napapanahon sa sunod-sunod na operation na isinasagawa ng ating mga law enforcers na nag resulta sa malawakang pagkakakumpiska ng mga live wild animals.

“It was indeed timely as the country just witnessed series of law enforcement operations that resulted in massive seizures of live wild animals and arrest of wild-

life criminals—proof that the Philippines remains steadfast on its commitment to fighting illegal wildlife trade that is driving endangered species to the brink of extinction.”, dagdag pa ni Cimatu.

Idinagdag pa ni Cimatu na ang pangangalaga ng kapaligiran ay 'di lamang solong responsibilidad ng gobyerno kundi katuwang dapat ang publiko upang mas maging matagumpay.

Aniya, may mga simpleng pamamaraan para maprotektahan ang kapaligiran katulad ng pagtitipid ng tubig at enerhiya, pagtangkilik ng malinis ng langis at tamang waste management.

**BENEDICT
ABAYGAR, JR.**



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BOSES ng PINOY, MATA ng BAYAN

Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao magkakasunod na nilindol

EARTH, NAGPAPARAMDAM — DENR

ANG sunud-sunod na lindol sa bansa ay maaari umanong “pagpaparamdam” ng mundo dahil may mensahe itong nais iparating, sabi ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu nitong Miyerkules.

“Baka paraan ito ng pagpaparamdam ng Earth. Sabi niya ‘yayanigin ko [ito] some more,’” sabi ni Cimatu.

Matatandaang, noong Lunes, niyanig ng Magnitude 6.1 na lindol ang Central Luzon, Magnitude 6.5 sa Visayas noong Martes at sinundan pa ng Magnitude 4.5 aftershock sa Castillejos, Zambales.

Naitala naman kahapon ang magkasunod na lindol sa Davao Occidental at Davao Oriental bago mag-alas-12:00 ng tanghali ng Miyerkules.

Unang naitala ng Philip-

pine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) ang Magnitude 4.5 sa layong 374 kilometro ng Sarangani, Davao Occidental na may lalim na 270 kilometro.

Wala namang naiulat na intensity at aftershocks at hindi na inaasahan na magdudulot ng pinsala.

Sumunod namang niyanig ng Magnitude 4.7 ang Baganga, Davao Oriental alas-11:43 ng umaga.

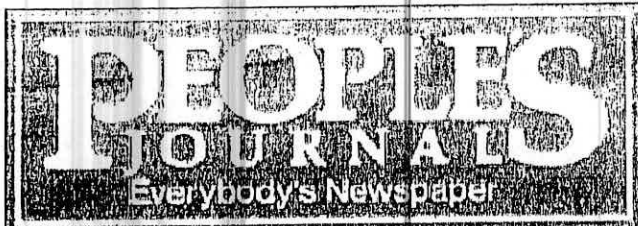
May lalim na 11 kilometro ang lindol na tectonic ang origin. Naitala ang instrumental Intensity 1 sa Bislig City, Surigao del Sur.

Ayon kay Henry Peñarubia, Science Research Specialist ng Phivolcs, wala lang inaasahang pinsala sa naturang mga lindol sa Davao na normal na rin umang naranasan.

(V. Reyes)



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Massive earthquakes provide new insight into deep Earth

IN the waning months of 2018, two of the mightiest deep earthquakes ever recorded in human history rattled the Tonga-Fiji region of the South Pacific.

In the first-ever study of these deep earthquakes — generally defined as any earthquake occurring 350 kilometers or more below the Earth's surface — a Florida State University-led research team characterized these significant seismological events, revealing new and surprising information about our planet's mysterious, ever-changing interior.

The team's findings, published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, delineate the complex geological processes responsible for the earthquakes and suggest that the first powerful perturbation may have actually triggered the second.

"We don't have these kind of large earthquakes too often," said study author Wenyuan Fan, an earthquake seismologist in FSU's Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science. "These deep earthquakes, especially larger earthquakes, aren't really promoted by the ambient environment. So why is this happening? It's a compelling question to ask."

While deep earthquakes are rarely felt on the Earth's surface, studying these titanic events can help researchers better understand the systems and structures of the inner Earth.

But the precise mechanisms of deep earthquakes have long been a mystery to earthquake scientists. The extreme temperature and pressure conditions of the deep Earth aren't suitable for the kinds of mechanical processes typically responsible for earthquakes — namely the movement and sudden slippage of large plates.

Instead, the extraordinary pressure holds things firmly in place, and the soaring temperatures make rocky material behave like chocolate — moving around viscously instead of like ice cubes as is seen in the shallow surface.

Using advanced waveform analyses, Fan and his team found that the first quake — a behemoth clocking in at magnitude 8.2, making it the second-largest deep earthquake ever recorded — was the product of two distinct physical processes.

The earthquake, they found, began in one of the region's seismically important slabs, a portion of one tectonic plate subducted beneath another. Slab cores are cooler than their seething hot surroundings, and therefore more amenable to earthquake nucleation.

Once the earthquake began forming in the slab core, it propagated out into its warmer and more ductile surroundings. This outward propagation moved the earthquake from one mechanical process to another.

(ScienceDaily)



Duterte orders return of garbage to Canada

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte yesterday ordered the Customs bureau to return to Canada the trash it sent to the Philippines a few years ago as he chided the North American country for supposedly turning Manila into its dump.

Duterte said Canada should prepare a grand reception for its waste, which arrived in the Philippines in 2013.

"I want a boat prepared. I'll give a warning to Canada maybe next week that they better pull that thing out or I will set sail, there in Canada, I will dump their trash there,"

the President said during a meeting on the effects of Monday's earthquake in Pampanga.

"I will really return (the garbage)... Load the containers to a ship and I will advise Canada that your garbage is on the way. Prepare a grand reception. Eat it if you want to," he added.

Duterte said he could not understand why Canada is turning the Philippines into a dumpsite.

"They have been sending their trash to us. Well, not this time. We will quarrel with each other. So what if we quarrel with Canada? We'll declare

war against them, we can beat them," he said.

"Buang ito kinakaya-kaya tayo. Hindi ako papayag ng ganon (Crazies. They are pushing us around. I won't let that happen)," Duterte said.

Valenzuela-based company Chronic Plastics Inc. imported more than 50 containers with waste from Canada in 2013. More than half or 29 of the containers with trash were dumped in a landfill in Tarlac.

Environment groups have expressed concern that the shipment might contain toxic materials that could harm the health of local residents.

During his visit to the

Philippines in 2015, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said a process was being developed to solve the problem but did not provide specifics.

"I have obviously been made aware of the situation and I've also been told that there is a Canadian solution in the process of being developed," Trudeau said on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit hosted by the Philippines four years ago.

"But, at the same time, I know that this has exposed a problem that needs fixing within our own legislation

that we're going to lean into and make sure happens," he added.

Earlier this month, environment groups urged Canada to take back the garbage sent to the Philippines in 2013, noting that the sending of the waste was a violation of the Basel Convention.

Duterte claimed Canada sent the trash to the Philippines after agreeing to extend educational grants.

"We will bring it back to them... Prepare... and celebrate because your garbage is coming home. Other wastes, which can be loaded in five trucks, dump them in the Canadian

embassy," Duterte said.

He also vowed to fire customs officials if they allow garbage to enter the country.

"The next time they do it I will sack all of them," the President said.

Canada said yesterday it is working with the Philippine government for a timely removal of the garbage.

"Canada is strongly committed to collaborating with the Philippine government to resolve the waste issue and it is aware of the court decision ordering the importer to ship the garbage back to Canada," the Canadian embassy said.

- With Pia Lee-Brago



Duterte tells Canada: Take back trash

**By Leila B. Salaverria,
Dona Z. Pazzibugan
and Tonette Orejas**
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte has threatened to send back to Canada tons of garbage that had been misdeclared and illegally shipped to the Philippines after years of inaction by the Canadian government.

At a briefing in San Fernando, Pampanga, on the effects of the earthquake that hit the province on Tuesday, the President also said he was prepared to "declare war" on Canada over the trash and for "making us a dumpsite" for its waste.

"He is serious to ship the trash back to Canada," his spokesperson, Salvador Panelo, said on Wednesday.

EcoWaste Coalition, an environmental group, on Wednesday urged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to "act fast" on Mr. Duterte's ultimatum to ship back the 103 12-meter freight containers of trash that were shipped to the Philippines in 2013 and 2014.

The shipment was declared recyclable plastics, but officials found that these were household waste, including adult diapers and electronic waste, in violation of the Toxic Substances

and Hazardous Wastes Control Act of 1990.

64% nonrecyclable

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said about 64 percent of the trash was "baled municipal solid waste or garbage destined for immediate local disposal and cannot be recycled."

After six years, 77 of the containers remained at the Manila and Subic ports. In 2015, the contents from 26 containers were illegally disposed of at a private landfill in Tarlac province.

In June 2016, a Manila trial court ordered the return of the

trash to Canada at the expense of the importer.

The Ontario-based Chronic Inc. shipped the waste to Chronic Plastic and Live Green Enterprises.

Canadian ambassador

Canada's Ambassador to Manila John Holmes said he was surprised at the President's threat, saying Ottawa was working with Manila so it could take back the garbage.

"I won't comment on the specific words of the President or his tone, but I will say this: our prime minister has recommitted to resolving this issue, including taking the waste back to Canada," Holmes told reporters during an embassy event in Quezon City on Wednesday.

Mr. Duterte ranted against the garbage and an aborted deal to purchase military helicopters from Canada because Ottawa did not want his government to use the aircraft against Filipinos.

"I want a boat prepared. I'll give a warning to Canada maybe next week that they better pull that thing out or I will set sail to Canada and pour that garbage there," he said.

"I will tell them to prepare, and celebrate, because your garbage is coming home," he said. "Son of a . . . This world is about who gets pushed around. Not me."

"We will fight Canada, we will declare war against them. We can take them on. I will really return it to them," he added.

The President also threatened to dump the trash at the Canadian Embassy.

Working on issues

In a statement, the embassy said officials from both countries were working on issues related to removing the waste "with a view to a timely resolution" and "to ensure the material is processed in an environmentally responsible way."

Holmes could not set a timeframe for the return of the trash, though, saying: "It's a complicated issue with legal and other (kinds of) issues that need to be resolved."

The ambassador disclosed that a joint technical working group had been formed and the Philippine team went to Canada two months ago to meet with its counterpart.

Aileen Lucero, EcoWaste national coordinator, said Mr. Duterte's tirade "reflects our nation's gross disappointment over Canada's failure to act with dispatch to reclaim their waste."

EcoWaste and four other international environmental groups have renewed calls on Trudeau to order the repatriation of the garbage following findings by the Pacific Center for Environmental Law and Litigation (Pcell) that Canada violated the Basel Convention.

The Philippines and Canada are signatories to the 1995 Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and Disposal, which provides that "the exporting country must take back the waste materials if the receiving country refuses to accept them."

The garbage is among several festering issues that have soured ties between the two governments.

Trudeau has been among the most vocal critics of Mr. Duterte's war against illegal drugs, which has killed thousands of people.

—WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, JHESSET O. ENANO, CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE, AFP AND REUTERS INQ



Canada 'working to resolve' garbage

By Arjay L. Balinbin *Reporter*

THE EMBASSY of Canada in Manila responded on Wednesday to President Rodrigo R. Duterte's warning that he would declare war on Canada if it will not pull out its trash shipped to the Philippines about five years ago.

The embassy said the governments of the Philippines and Canada have been "working to resolve the issue."

"Canada is strongly committed to collaborating with the Government of the Philippines to resolve this issue and is aware of the court decision ordering the importer to ship the material back to Canada," the embassy said in a statement.

It also noted that "a joint technical working group, consisting of officials from both countries, is examining the full spectrum of issues related to the removal of the waste with a view to a timely resolution."

"In 2016, Canada amended its regulations around hazardous waste shipments to prevent such events from happening again. We are committed to working collaboratively with the Government of the Philippines to ensure the material is processed in an environmentally responsible way," the embassy said.

The embassy also said both countries are celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations this year.

"The relationship is built on strong people to people ties, our common interest in strengthening political, economic and cultural relations and in our mutual commitment to peace," it said further.

Mr. Duterte made his remarks regarding the waste issue at the Provincial Capitol of Pampanga in San Fernando City last Tuesday during a situation briefing on last Monday's earthquake as it affected Region III.

"*Yung basura ng* (The trash from) Canada, I want a boat prepared. I'll give a warning to Canada maybe next week that they better pull that thing out or I will set sail *doon sa* (to) Canada. *Ibuhos ko 'yang basura nila doon* (I will dump their trash there)," he said.

He added: "I cannot understand why they are making us a dump site.... Well, not this time. *Magkaway kami* (We are enemies)... *Eh 'di ano. Awayin natin ang* (We will fight) Canada. I will declare war against them. *Kaya 'man natin 'yan sila* (We can defeat Canada)."

For his part, Magdalo Representative Gary C. Alejano said in a statement: "*Tama naman ang Pangulo na hindi tayo dump site ng Canada para tanggapiñ ang kanilang basurang ilegal na pumasok dito sa bansa* (The President is right in saying that we are not Canada's dump site as to just accept their garbage that was illegally shipped to our country)."

"However, I can't help but notice how the President finds it so easy to express outrage over Canada's trash, but never when China infringes on our sovereignty and national interest," the Otso Diretso senatorial candidate also said.

He said China and Canada "have both done something against our national interest."

"[B]oth cases warrant an appropriate response from the government. I hope this administration stops making us look like fools with senseless theatrical displays and just get to work already."



Trusted Since 1898

The Manila Times

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Canada vows resolution to trash problem

CANADA and the Philippines were working together to resolve the garbage issue, the Embassy of Canada said on Wednesday, a day after President Rodrigo Duterte threatened to declare war over the dumping of trash in Manila.

"Canada is strongly committed to collaborating with the Government of the Philippines to resolve this issue and is aware of the court decision ordering the importer to ship the material back to Canada," the embassy said.

It said a joint technical working group, consisting of officials from both countries, "is examining the full spectrum of issues related to the removal of the waste with a view to a timely resolution."

In 2016, Canada amended its

regulations on hazardous waste shipments to prevent such events from happening again.

"We are committed to working collaboratively with the government of the Philippines to ensure the material is processed in an environmentally responsible way," the embassy said.

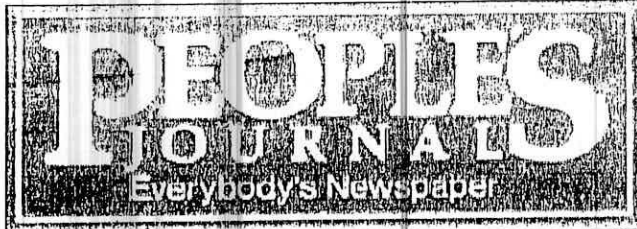
It noted that Canada and the Philippines would be celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations in 2019.

"The relationship is built on strong people-to-people ties, our common interest in strengthening political, economic and cultural relations, and in our mutual commitment to peace," the embassy added.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



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Canada resolving garbage issue — ambassador

By Cristina Lee-Pisco

THE Canadian Embassy in Manila yesterday reiterated Ottawa's commitment to resolve the "complex" toxic garbage issue with the Philippines amid a warning from President Rodrigo Duterte that he would declare war against Canada if it would not take back the trash in one week.

"Our Prime Minister (Justin Trudeau) committed and has recommitted to resolving this issue, including taking the waste back to Canada. He said that in numerous occasions but we can only do that in partnership of the government of the Philippines," Ambassador John Holmes said.

He stressed the issue is "complicated" and that "legal and other issues" need to be resolved first.

Holmes said a working group has been established to work on the garbage issue.

The group convened a meeting in Canada two months ago, he said.

"The progress is good but the Philippine side agrees that it's a complex issue that needs to be worked through very carefully."

Holmes refuses to say when the tons of trash could be taken back to Canada.

"I'm not putting a timeframe on it but I want to reiterate what our Prime Minister said, he's committed to allowing those containers to be brought back to Canada."

In 2017, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said legal restrictions have prevented the return of the waste to Canada.

He said the transaction was made between two private companies and thus, the question of who will shoulder the cost for the shipment will still have to be ironed out between Canada and the Philippines. More than a hundred container vans from Canada arrived in batches at the Port of Manila from 2013 to 2014.

The shipment was declared to contain only plastic scraps, but was later found to have non-recyclable plastics, newspapers, household wastes and used adult diapers.



Duterte sa Canada:

'KUNIN ANG BASURA O MAGDEKLARA AKO NG GIYERA'

NAGBALALA si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa Canada na magdedeklara siya ng giyera kung hindi kukunin ang basurang itinapon sa Pilipinas.

Sa susunod na linggo ay papatak na sa anim na taon mula nang dalhin sa bansa ang basura ng Canada.

Nagpahanda ang Pangulo ng barko at kung hindi pa kukunin ng Canada ang kanilang basura ay pupunta siya roon para ibuhos ang basura.

"I want a boat prepared. I'll 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," pahayag ni Duterte sa situation briefing sa Pampangang kasunod ng magnitude na 6.1 na lindol.

Hindi maintindihan ng Pangulo kung bakit ginawa ng Canada na tambakan ng basura ang Pilipinas.

Kaya babala ng Pangulo, magdedeklara siya ng giyera kung hindi kukunin ng Canada ang kanilang basura.

"Magkaaway kami ng... Eh, 'di ano, awayin natin ang Canada. We'll declare war against them, kaya man nati'yan sila. Isaoli ko talaga. Tignan mo. Ikarga mo 'yan doon sa barko, load the containers to a ship, and I will advise Canada that your garbage is on the way. Prepare a grand reception. Eat it if you want to," ani Duterte.



Canada, nangakong aalisin ang basura

Nina ROY C. MABASA, VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA, BETH CAMIA at LEONEL ABASOLA

Nangako kahapon ang Government of Canada na makikipagtulungan sa Pilipinas kaugnay sa pag-aalis ng tone-toneladang Canadian garbage na ipinadala sa Pilipinas anim na taon na ang nakalipas.

Sa isang pahayag, sinabi ng Canadian Embassy sa Manila na committed ito na makipagtulungan sa Pilipinas upang matiyak na ang mga materyal ay maiproseso "[in an] environmentally responsible way."

"Canada is strongly committed to collaborating with the Government of the Philippines to resolve this issue and is aware of the court decision ordering the importer to ship the material back to Canada. A joint technical working group, consisting of officials from both countries, is examining the full spectrum of issues to the removal of the waste with a view to a timely resolution," pahayag ng Canadian Embassy.

Nitong Martes, nagbabala si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa gobyerno ng Canada na kunin pabalik sa kanilang bansa ang hazardous

materials o siya mismo ang magdadala nito sa kanilang dalampasigan.

"Yung basura ng Canada, I want a boat prepared. I'll 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... Awayin natin ang Canada. We'll declare war against them, kaya man natin sila. Isauli ko talaga ah tingnan mo," ani Duterte.

Simula 2013 hanggang 2014, halos 103 containers ng basura mula Canada ang ipinadala sa Manila.

Ang Valenzuela-based consignee na Chronic Plastics, Inc. ay kinasuhan ng paglabag sa Republic Act 9003 o Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and the 1995 Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Disposal.

Sa ngayon, halos isang quarter ng tone-toneladang basura ang ibinaon sa landfill sa Tarlac.

EXAGGERATED LANG

Samantala, sinabi kahapon ni Senator

Aquilino Pimentel na dapat nang aksiyunan ng Canada ang basurang itinapon nito sa bansa, kahit na sa tingin niya ay exaggeration lamang ang pagdeklara ni Pangulong Duterte ng giyera laban dito.

"Yung 'declare war' siyempre exaggeration 'yan ...but that means that CANADA must seriously act on the waste they have dumped into our country 'cause that issue has been pending for so long!" diin ni Pimentel sa kanyang text message nang hingan ng komento.

Natawa naman si Sen. Francis Pangilinan sa banta ni Duterte na giyera sa Canada, samantalang nanahimik diumano ang administrasyon sa mga aktibidad ng China sa teritorial waters ng Pilipinas, at sa pagkakasangkot ng mga lokal na opisyal sa illegal drugs.

"Gigiyerahan ang Canada dahil sa basura pero walang imik sa China sa pagpapalusot ng iligal na droga at pagsakop sa ating mga isla. Weh," isinulat ni Pangilinan sa Twitter.



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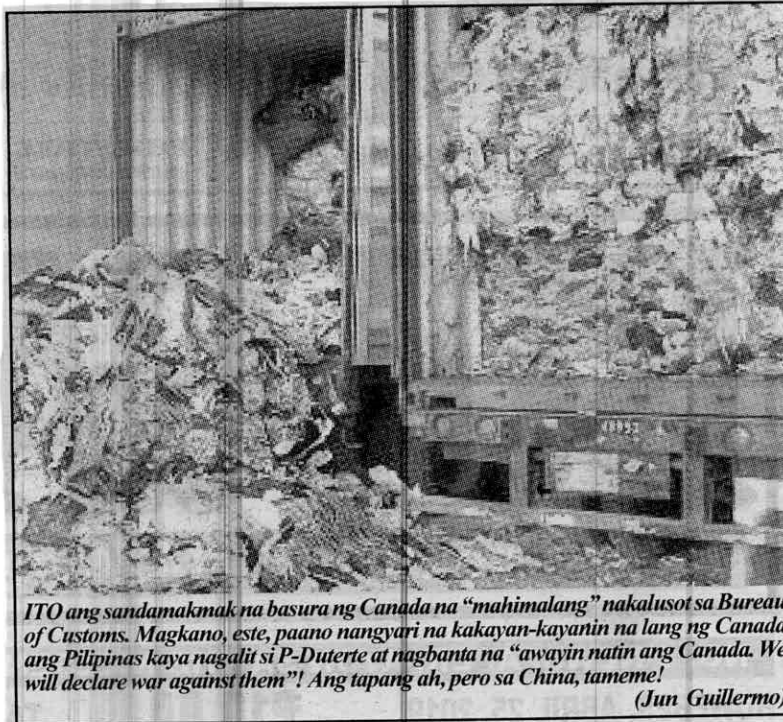
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ITO ang sandamakmak na basura ng Canada na "mahimalang" nakalusot sa Bureau of Customs. Magkano, este, paano nangyari na kakayan-kayanin na lang ng Canada ang Pilipinas kaya nagalit si P-Duterte at nagbanta na "awayin natin ang Canada. We will declare war against them"! Ang tapang ah, pero sa China, tameme!
(Jun Guillermo)



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Aklan mayor dismissed over Boracay

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) yesterday served a dismissal order against Malay, Aklan Mayor Cicero Cawaling for grave misconduct and other offenses that led to the environmental degradation of Boracay Island.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said the order was implemented in connection with a decision from the Office of the Ombudsman which found Cawaling guilty of gross neglect of duty, conduct unbecoming of a public official and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service.

Also meted with the same penalty was the town's li-

censing officer, Jen Salsona.

Aside from forfeiture of retirement benefits, Cawaling and Solsona are perpetually disqualified from holding other posts in government.

Año said the ombudsman found substantial evidence against the two officials for allowing some establishments in Boracay to operate without the necessary fire safety inspection certificate and other permits, including a municipal ordinance requiring a 30-meter

easement from the shoreline.

Their offenses violate Republic Act 7160 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

"By not implementing this ordinance, Cawaling violated Section 444 (b) (2) of Republic Act 7160, which commands him to enforce all laws and ordinances relative to the governance of the Municipal-

ity of Malay," Año said in a statement, quoting a portion of the ombudsman's decision.

The cases against other officials, including Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores, were dismissed for lack of substantial evidence.



Cruise ships barred from visiting Boracay during peak tourist seasons

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By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO [@akosistellaBM](#)
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

BORACAY ISLAND will be closed off to passenger cruise ships during certain times of the year, to ease the pressure on the island's ecosystem, especially during the peak seasons for tourists.

Instead, cruise ships are encouraged to visit other alternative destinations such as "Subic, Bataan, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Iloilo, Bohol [Tagbilaran Port], [and] Bacolod," according to Undersecretary for Tourism Regulation Coordination and Resource Generation Arturo P. Boncato Jr. of the Department of Tourism (DOT) in his letters to various stakeholders, including shore-excursion agents. Shorex agents are tour operators who offer land tours on cruise passengers, assuring them seamless transfers from ship to shore.

This developed as island residents aired their complaints on Facebook over a visiting cruise ship off Boracay Island during Holy Week, which they believed

led to the surge in tourists during that period.

Resident Freida Dario-Santiago provided the BUSINESSMIRROR with the photo which she posted on April 15, Holy Monday, when the cruise ship docked across the island's main beachfront. "The arrival of this particular cruise ship on the Monday of Holy Week was alarming, to say the least. True enough, from a serene Monday morning, the island was suddenly inundated by a worrisome influx of Chinese tourists—not exactly model tourists."

She lamented: "It pains me that it seems we haven't learned our lesson. Quantity over quality is still the name of the game.... We, the Boracaynons did not sacrifice six months of closure [and still try-

ing to recover from the massive losses] for these cruise ships to haul tourists over that don't pay a centavo here!"

Dario-Santiago, who moved to Boracay from Manila in 2003 averred "the government should definitely clamp down on cruise ships, especially to tiny, fragile islands such as Boracay. We are not a city! I don't know about the actual numbers and the carrying capacity of the island when these cruise ships arrive, but one thing's for sure, traffic congestion along the roads and beaches is shoulder-to-shoulder, garbage is overflowing, public transportation is hijacked to cater to the sheer volume of visitors, and yet local businesses don't benefit from all this chaos, and we are left to cleanup after their mess."

She also pointed out the environmental impact from the visit of the cruise ships. Several studies have shown cruise ships are among the world's worst polluters of oceans.

Data from the Caticlan Jetty Port administration office confirmed a visit on April 15 of the MS *Voyager of the Seas* of the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. The ship was said to be carrying 3,334 passengers. The arrival of the cruise ship passengers on Boracay increased



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

A broader look at today's business

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the number of tourists that day to 10,753, a huge volume considering it was only Holy Monday.

Data from the DOT Region 6 showed tourist volumes on Monday after Palm Sunday are normally among the lowest for the Holy Week; in 2018, arrivals were just 5,203, and in 2017, just 6,752.

The jetty port office also reported the *MS Voyager of the Seas* visited Boracay on April 10, carrying 2,853 passengers. Three other cruise ships made port calls on Boracay earlier this year—the *Star Legend* (Windstar Cruises) on February 27, the *SS Navigator* (Regent Seven Seas Cruises) on March 4, and *MS Europa* (Hapag-Lloyd) on March 22—but carried only 246 passengers, 384 passengers, and 300 passengers, respectively.

Additional data from DOT Region 6 showed the number of tourists who visited Boracay from Holy Monday to Easter Sunday, or from April 15 to 21, 2019 reached 62,371. This was 34 percent more than the volume received during the same holiday season in 2018, which was from March 26 to April 1. Tourists who departed from the island from April 15 to 21, 2019 numbered 61,665. The 2019 data did not make a distinction between foreign and domestic tourists.

In a separate interview, Bon-

cato assured that the cruise ship, which made a port call on Boracay on Holy Monday, did not violate any government regulation as the close-out period for that week was from April 16 to 23, or from Holy Tuesday to Easter Tuesday. In the Philippines, the Holy Week usually starts on Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Sunday.

He also said other close-out dates for cruise ship visits, are this summer, from April 24 to May 31, 2019; during the All Saints'/All Souls' Day holiday or from October 26 to November 8, 2019; the Southeast Asian Games from November 23 to December 19, 2019; and during the Christmas/New Year holiday, from December 20, 2019 to January 5, 2020.

Passenger cruise ships were also barred earlier from docking in Boracay from January 29 to February 12, 2019, during the Chinese New Year festivities.

Boncato added, among the regulations agreed on by members of the BIATF with other relevant government agencies, is that ships carrying only 2,000 passengers or less will be allowed to visit Boracay starting April 16, 2019, "except during close-off dates."

The new cruise ship regulations were affirmed by BIATF principals in a meeting on February 1.



National Land Use Act inupuan ni Cynthia Villar

ITINUTURING na isa sa mga priority measures ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang panukalang batas kaugnay ng National Land Use Act ngunit 'inupuan' lang ito ni Sen. Cynthia Villar, bilang chairman ng Senate committees on agriculture and food, agrarian reform, and environment and natural resources.

Ito ang sentimiyento ng ilang

magsasaka sa Central Luzon at sa iba pang probinsiya kaugnay ng naging komplikadong suliranin sa agrikultura at pabahay.

Matatandaang kabilang ang pagpasa bilang batas sa National Land Use Act sa mga binanggit ni Duterte sa kanyang ikatlong State of the Nation Address (SONA) noong Hulyo 2018.

Isa ito sa kanyang priority

measures at nanawagan pa sa Senado at Kamara na tiyakin ang pagsasabatas nito.

Magugunitang si Sen. Miguel Zubiri ang may akda ng Senate Bill No. 1522, o National Land Use Act of 2017 o mas kilala bilang "An Act instituting a National Land Use policy, providing the implementing mechanisms therefore, and for other

purposes."

Layunin ng panukalang batas na magtayo ng isang national agency na magkategorya sa land resource sa apat, kabilang ang protection, production, settlements development, at infrastructure development.

Nakabinbin ang panukala sa Kongreso sa nakalipas na dalawang dekada.

Pero sa kabila ng pagiging priority measure, natengga ang panukala sa komite ni Villar.

Matatandaang binatikos si Villar dahil sa kanyang business interest kaya hindi umusad ang priority measure ng Pangulo.

Ayon sa advocacy group na Campaign for Land Use Policy

Now (CLUP NOW) ginamit umano ni Villar ang kanyang chairmanship ng Senate committees on agriculture and food, agrarian reform, and environment and natural resources para paboran ang Vista Land, na pag-aari ng pamilya Villar.

Idinagdag ng CLUP Now, sangkot ang Vista Land sa conversion ng mga prime agricultural lands sa real estate projects.

Sinabi ng CLUP NOW na hinaharang umano ni Villar ang National Land Use Act.

"Bakit kaya malakas ang loob ni Villar na suwayin ang kagustuhan ni Duterte sa kabila na alam niyang nais ng pangulo na ito'y maisabatas na?" pahayag ng CLUP Now.

Hindi lang sa prime agricu-

ltural lands kontrobersiyal ang Vista Land, matatandaang nabatikos din si Villar nang imbestigahan ang pagbaho ng Boracay na ang kanyang pamilya ay may operasyon ng negosyo sa isla.

Pag-aari rin ng Vista Land ang Boracay Sands Hotel at may bahagi rin sa Costa de la Vista na matatagpuan sa loob ng island resort. Hindi ito isinapubliko ni Villar kung hindi pa nadiskubre. Nagsagawa pa noon si Villar ng inspeksyon sa Boracay. Tinutulan din noon ni Villar ang pagsasara ng Boracay.

Tanong pa ng CLUP Now, "Kung totoong hindi ginagamit ni Villar ang kanyang posisyon, bakit hindi niya sundin ang kautusan ni Duterte at ipasa na ang National Land Use Act?"



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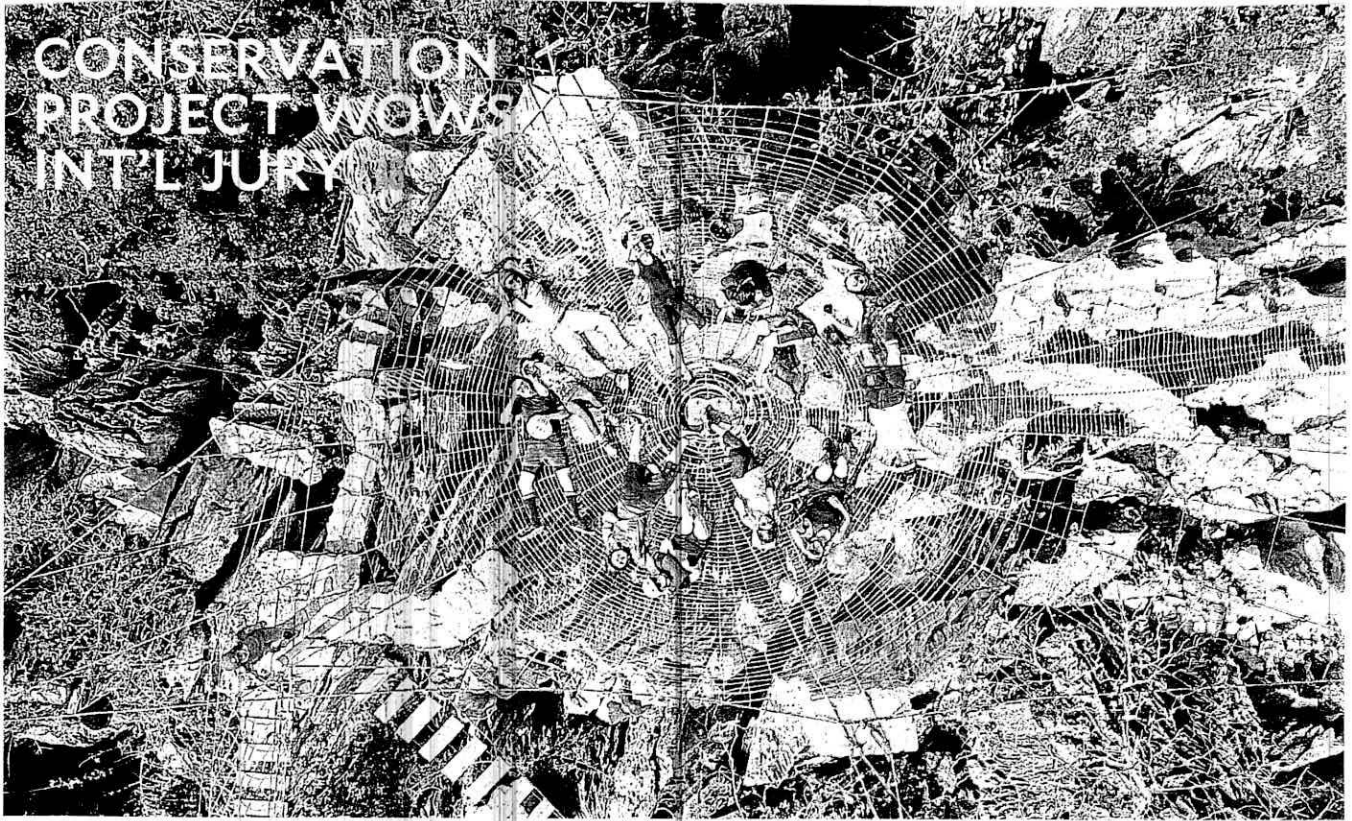
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**CONSERVATION
PROJECT WOWS
INT'L JURY**

WEB DESIGN A temporary, low-impact installation dubbed "sapot" (spider web) rewards visitors with a panoramic view of Masungi Georeserve, a limestone and native biodiversity conservation project in Baras, Rizal province, which recently received an award for being one of the most sustainable destinations in the world. —CARLO DELANTAR/CONTRIBUTOR



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World Travel & Tourism Council cites Philippines' Masungi Georeserve as one of world's most sustainable destinations

By Anna Reyes

Seville, Spain – Fresh from its Special Commendation from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Masungi Georeserve once again brought honor to the Philippines during the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Global Summit as one of three destinations leading sustainability globally.

Headlined by President Barack Obama, together with the First Lady of Kenya and the President of Spain, the Summit is regarded as the world's most important event for the Travel and Tourism Sector.

Masungi Georeserve, an innovative limestone forest and biodiversity conservation project along Marcos Highway, Baras, Rizal garnered a coveted finalist spot at the "Oscars of Travel" – the 15th Tourism for Tomorrow Awards under the prestigious Destination Stewardship Category. The georeserve has succeeded in restoring and protecting threatened rainforests and natural heritage despite formidable odds.

"Masungi Georeserve does the Philippines proud with its high standards of construction and maintenance, and its commitment to high quality guiding by local people. The reserve is an excellent example of habitat restoration," commented senior judge Tony Charters.

Masungi is the first and only Philippine project nominated under this category in the Awards' fifteen-year run. It was selected from over 180 nominations from 71 nations by an independent panel of the world's leading sustainable tourism experts.

A Story of Sacrifice

Judges, industry leaders and international media recognized Masungi's story of sacrifice, determination and passion for over twenty years of battle-drawn conservation.

They celebrated Masungi's success amid countless threats to its conservation, including rampant land speculation, quarrying, illegal logging and other harmful extractive industries.

Jeff Rutledge, president and CEO of Headline Sponsor AIG Travel, commended Masungi for successfully "establishing one of the first rewilding projects in the Philippines."

Greg Dickinson of The Telegraph noted that Masungi "is more than a grown-up playground. It is the product of a collective of single-minded Filipinos who stood in the way of illegal loggers and other environmental offenders to protect one of their country's most precious geological regions. These are the stewards of destination conservation."

Tony Charters, senior judge of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards further remarked that "The partnerships that Masungi developed with the local community, neighbors and government agencies stands it in good stead for the future. Importantly, the tours offered are of high quality, informative, and fun!"

For Fiona Jefferey Obe, Chair of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, "[Masungi Georeserve] should be proud of what [they're] doing. [They] are a beacon for the country."

Department of Tourism Undersecretary Bong Bengzon also congratulated Masungi for its recent awards, including another finalist spot at the upcoming United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Awards in St. Petersburg,

Russia in September 2019.

"The DOT is proud of [Masungi's] achievements and remains committed to promoting Masungi Georeserve to both domestic and international markets. Mabuhay!"

Masungi's Future

Acknowledging Masungi's outstanding work, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources engaged Masungi to continue its landscape restoration efforts in denuded lands surrounding the georeserve to help reach the department's reforestation goals. In the footsteps of bold environmental initiatives in Boracay and Manila Bay, Secretary Cimatú recently vowed to go after real estate speculators and environment despoilers in the area.

In this new area, Masungi's park rangers and volunteers are planting new native trees, protecting the land and facing new challenges in a continuing saga of restoration and conservation.

"Visible and unequivocal government resolve, public vigilance and international attention will spell the difference between the eventual survival or demise of Masungi and other threatened environments in the Philippines. Our team has endured countless challenges, even assaults and political harassment for over twenty years, in defense of this special place. Our work is not easy. But we now know that the world is taking notice of Masungi's story, and we only hope that this recognition inspires more changemakers to follow suit and help fight for the environment," comments Ann Dumaliang, Managing Trustee at the Masungi Georeserve Foundation.

"Strong partnerships with



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(From left) Tony Charters, senior judge, Ann and Billie Dumaliang, managing trustees, Fiona Jefferey Obe, chair of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, and Cat Dumancas, consultant.

groups such as the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, the scientific and journalistic communities, and upstanding local government leaders continue to be critical if we are to realize our ambitious mission of reviving some 3,000 hectares of forests," she adds.

Asked about a brazen and armed invasion of a section of the conservation area not open to tourists back in 2016, she revealed that sadly, the perpetrators comprising of real estate speculators, professional squatters and their cohorts in politics are still lawlessly occupying over a hundred hectares of land, harassing park

rangers, and ridiculously trying to evict Masungi and exacting rent from land under the project.

Exemplars of Destination Stewardship

Masungi Georeserve was short-listed under the Destination Stewardship category, together with Grupo Rio de Plata of Brazil and the Sustainable Destination Council of St. Kitts, one half of an island-state in the Caribbean, which eventually garnered the top award.

"What Masungi, St. Kitts, and Rio de Prata show is that when tourism initiatives are managed well, and

with a creative spark, they can be a tangible force of good for everyone – locals, tourists, governments, tortoises, cloud rats. And while a localized tourism scheme may seem like a drop in the ocean compared to the wider societal and environmental challenges humanity faces today, the collective impact is vast. Like a cobweb threading itself to every corner of the planet, the movement for sustainable tourism is a deceptively powerful force," noted The Telegraph's Greg Dickinson.

The Tourism for Tomorrow Awards are the world's top accolade in sustainable tourism; they recognize the highest ethical standards in the sector and are respected by industry leaders, governments and international media alike. The Awards are aimed at recognizing best practice in sustainable tourism within the industry globally.

The Destination Stewardship category celebrates organizations that have rejuvenated a place, maintained and developed its authenticity, brought stakeholders together, and created something new and attractive.

Tourism & Climate Change

At the Summit, President Barack Obama called on one of the world's largest and fastest growing sectors to use its collective power to help address climate change.

"Some of the most beautiful places on this planet that we most want to visit, and share with our children, and spend time in, are at risk," he said, adding that climate change "is the defining issue of our time, even if people don't realize it yet. It's here."

For more information about Masungi Georeserve, visit www.masungigeoreserve.com.



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Esperon wants Pag-asa Island declared protected area

THE Philippines is considering declaring Pag-asa (Thitu) Island and the eastern part of the Kalayaan Island Group (Spratly Group of Islands) as maritime protected areas (MPA), National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said on Wednesday.

These areas are within the exclusive economic of the country.

"With an MPA in place, we aim to institutionalize and promote efforts towards environmental and marine biodiversity protection within the resource-rich West Philippine Sea (South China Sea)," Esperon said.

The former military chief said turning Pag-asa and Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal into an MPA would be discussed by government officials.

"We want to propose that because I am sure they would also want to preserve or take care of the fisheries resources and all other things that are within that marine protected area. We did it in the Philippine (Benham) Rise, so we would like to do it somewhere in the Ayungin area," he told reporters.

He said the move would be discussed with countries claiming parts of the South China Sea.

Claimant countries include Viet-

nam, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines.

An area declared as an MPA would be limited to scientific studies only.

Esperon said about \$3 trillion was lost due to the "illegal activities" in Philippine-held areas in the South China Sea.

Recently, China was reported to have harvested giant clams in the Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal.

"You can just imagine how much we can get if we are able to enjoy our fishing grounds in this area and from the other side, east and the south [and] in Sulu Sea," Esperon said.

He said the military would not back down if the maritime dispute with China would lead to war.

"Let me assure you that the Armed Forces would go to war if so directed, the soldiers will not back down," he said.

He disclosed that the Chinese military was building its third aircraft carrier and "more deadly weapons."

"So, are they preparing for deterrence or are they preparing to go to war?" Esperon asked.

"If we are forced to go to war, we go to war," he added.

DEMPSEY REYES



The silence of the clams

From the movie "The Silence of the Lambs," one learns the meaning of the title as the slaughter of the innocents. But lambs aren't really all that silent; they bleat when frightened or when they sense danger.

Not so with clams. Unable to raise a howl, clams simply clam up. As when Chinese poachers steal them from Philippine waters, where Filipino marine scientists and other protectors of marine life had so painstakingly placed them to make them grow into giant sea creatures.

When news broke that Chinese poachers have harvested Filipino-reared giant clams (so like Chinese predators swooping down on Philippine-owned territories) and there were cries for the government to file a protest, Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. so crassly shrugged off the clams issue as "fucking food" and that he wouldn't want to be known as a defender of clams. He also didn't know there were giant clams (known in Filipino as *taklobo*) being raised there.

I conjured images of sea gods and goddesses of mythology armed with their pitchforks rising angrily from the deep blue undersea. Aquaman among them.

Locsin has since changed his stance, but his "I am not going down in history as a clam defender" protestation still rankles.

On Monday, a team of scientists and graduate students from the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) and experts from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources went on a research expedition in the West Philippine Sea in the area of the Kalayaan Group of Islands.



HUMAN FACE

MA. CERES P. DOYO

The Kalayaan Group of Islands includes Pag-asa, the biggest island in the group, claimed by the Philippines as it does the rest in the group. I had been there when only soldiers and a lone weatherman inhabited and guarded the island and its surroundings. That was in 1991.

According to a report by Chito Gaston of GMA News TV, the team sailed on board government research vessels to study marine biodiversity in the area and collect genetic samples. And, of course, to study the adverse effects on the marine ecosystem of China's questionable reclamation activities in the area.

On the "fucking food" aspect: Well, Filipino fishermen have already noticed negative impacts on their sea catch, not including the giant clams being nurtured as those are not for harvesting, selling and eating, but of fish that means food and livelihood for them.

I was able to visit the UP-MSI's Marine Laboratory in Bolinao, Pangasinan, years ago

when the Bolinao townsfolk were protesting the entry of a Taiwanese corporation that would excavate and exploit the town's limestone deposits and build a cement factory. I was doing a series on the issue then. To make a long story short, the Taiwanese firm and their Filipino would-be coinvestors backed off, but only after the locals put up a really, really good fight. I was glad to be of help.

While there, I was able to join UP's marine scientists when they sailed out to sea to visit and examine the growing giant clams they had placed on the seabed. I also got to see the nursery where the baby clams were being nurtured. Credits go to UP-MSI founder and former director Dr. Edgardo Gomez who launched the giant clam project.

Cape Bolinao is like any other besides its being a beach destination. I am no marine archaeologist, but I surmise the place must have been part of the sea eons ago because of the limestone and corals found even on high ground and, of course, the fossilized shells of giant clams that have been excavated from the earth. I saw lots of them lying around, and how I wished I could take one home.

Well, one day, someone knocked on my gate with two of those, one rather fossilized, the other one less so, but good enough to serve as a baptismal font. They were dug out from the ground, I was assured. They have beautified my garden.

The foreign secretary might want to read Inquirer Northern Luzon correspondent Gabriel Cardinosa's feature story on the would-be giant clams' journey from the UP-MSI nursery to the open sea (<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/playground-of-giant-clams>).

Send feedback to cerespd@gmail.com



EARTH MONTH FEATURE

American biologist wages crusade on this side of the world

By HENRYLITO D. TACIO

DARRELL BLATCHLEY first caught the attention of Davao City residents and local media when he opened D'Bone Collector Museum in Barangay Bucana.

But it was his findings on the cause of death of a juvenile Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*) that he became the draw of international press and conservationists.

The animal died a day after beaching in Barangay Cadunan in the municipality of Mabini in Compostela Valley. Recovered from the belly of the 15.4-foot sea creature were almost 40 kilograms of plastics—the most the marine biologist had ever seen inside one of those.

"Plastic was just bursting out of its stomach," Blatchley, who has

conducted several marine mammal post-mortems, told *National Geographic*. "We pulled out the first bag, then [a] second. By the time we hit 16 sacks—on top of the plastic, snack bags and big tangles of nylon ropes, I was like, 'Seriously?'"

He could not believe what he saw. "The plastic in some parts was so dense, it was almost becoming calcified; almost like a solid brick," the *New York Times* quoted him as saying. "It had been there for so long, it had started to compact."

After finding the cause of the

whale's death, the marine biologist wrote in a Facebook post: "It's disgusting. Action must be taken by the government against those who continue to treat waterways and oceans as dumpsites."

Plastic-driven economy

IN the last 10 years, Blatchley reported that 62 whales and dolphins have already died in the vicinity of Davao City. At least 47 of those pointed to plastic products and their variants as culprits.

"It's clear that we need to stop plastic at the source," the biologist pointed out. "Not only is plastic killing marine wildlife; it's also killing us as well."

In a report released a few years ago, the Ocean Conservancy singled out the Philippines as one of the five countries from where the majority of plastic originates. Also on the list were China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand.

"As rapidly developing economies,



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[some] countries are now passing through a typical stage of economic growth, as consumer demand for disposable products grows more rapidly than the waste-management infrastructure," the report said.

No wonder, plastics are "now part of the Filipinos' daily life," to quote Senior Environmental Management Specialist Juvinia P. Serafin of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau.

Plastics come in the form of acrylics, food containers and packages, utensils, sachet packs, kitchenware, toys and furniture, among others. But the most common of all are plastic bags, which British Prime Minister Theresa May dubbed as "the greatest environmental challenge facing the world."

Though more often used only once, plastic bags can't be recycled. Other similar pollutants include single-use plastics such as straws, coffee stirrers, soda and water bottles

and most food packaging materials.

The country's so-called sachet economy has also contributed to the proliferation of plastics. Products sold in single-use sachets include instant coffee, soap, shampoo, cooking oil, food seasoning and toothpaste. Once they're used, they are just thrown away.

"Plastic, particularly those for single-use packaging, has greatly contributed to the degradation of the environment," deplored Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu. "Plastic pollution continues to poison our oceans and injure marine life. When not properly disposed, they clog waterways and cause flooding."

Efforts recognized

RECIPIENT of the Datu Bago award (the highest given to Davao City residents), Blatchley couldn't agree more. That was one of the reasons he posted in his Facebook account photos of a clogged canal in Barangay 37-D, which everyone can see as

they visit his bone museum.

One netizen commented: "You always complain; why don't you clean it yourself?"

That sort of challenged the biologist, and so he did clean the waterway together with his two staff members. He again posted in his page what transpired with a caption: "SERIOUSLY, Davao?" as the post went viral.

The local government took notice of his deed, and so the city engineer's office in the Davao capital joined him in the cleanup effort.

Addressing Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte and her constituents, Blatchley said that as an American, he is just "a guest" in their locale.

"Davao has been my home for 24 years [now]," he said. "I love it here, [and] for that very reason, I am a public servant doing my part to make the Philippines cleaner and better."

CONTINUED ON E2



BLATCHLEY poses with the author.



ALMOST 40 kilograms of plastic pulled out of the whale's belly.

CONTINUED FROM E1

"If you are a guest and the host's house is on fire or flooding, is it not right to inform them and help?" the marine biologist rhetorically asked.

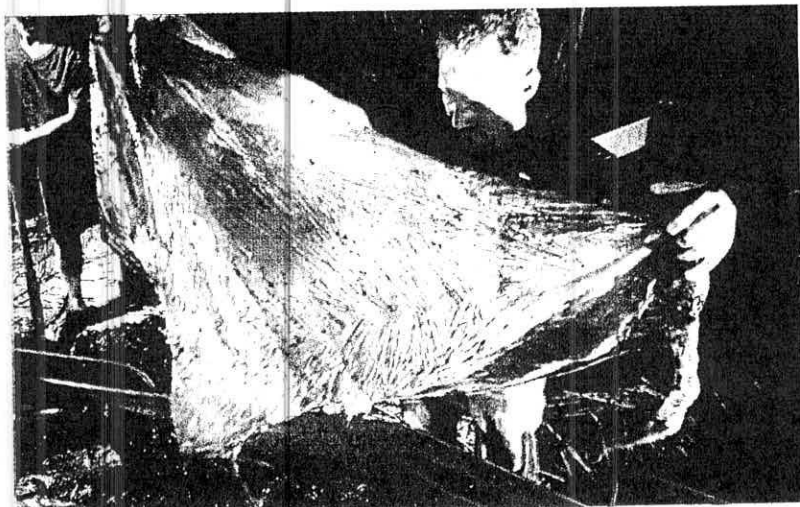
Truth is, when a canal becomes full of plastic, water cannot flow. "That causes flooding," Blatchley emphasized. "[It harbors] diseases such as leptospirosis. The flooding causes damage to roads and homes. [When that happens], the government has to repair the roads, [which cost] taxpayer's money."

"It's not the fault of the plastics," he went on to say. "It is caused by the lazy, undisciplined person who dropped [them]. We blame plastics when in reality, it's us human beings [who are solely responsible for this dilemma]."

The biologist waxed philosophical: "A bullet cannot kill without the human behind the gun. [The manner we] dispose our trash now affects everything."

Museum owner, curator

BLATCHLEY opened D'Bone Collector Museum to the public on January 27, 2012. In the beginning, the space it occupied was only 250 square meters, housing the preserved remains of more than 150 specimens.



THE biologist pulls out a sack from the carcass of a beaked whale after its beaching in Compostela Valley. PHOTOS: DARRRELL BLATCHLEY

Today, the museum occupies three floors, with more than 750 sq m of displays, and over 6,500 specimens on display, thus making it the largest collection of its kind in the Philippines.

"We strive to continuously raise the bar on quality," he told this author. "Additions and new specimens are added often. Through our collection, we help educate our visitors on the importance of these species when

they were still alive, and how to save [the remainder of their kind]."

The museum is on top of *TripAdvisor's* list for the best places to visit in Davao, and fifth for all of Mindanao.

"We want the museum to become the 'Smithsonian of Southern Philippines,' and will continue to raise the standards [for curation in this side of the country]," the American biologist declared.



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Group wants 'balanced' environment agenda for candidates

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

An environmental advocacy group has called on all political candidates to bare their agenda on environmental sustainability and push for balanced policies in managing the country's natural resources.

The Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) is challenging senatorial and local candidates to state their agenda to address the most urgent environmental challenges in the country as midterm polls near.

PBEST convenor Carmelo Bayarcal said balanced policies mean that the stewardship of the environment and economic development should not be in conflict.

"There is a middle ground approach to harnessing the development of potential of our natural resources that does not compromise the environment," he said.

PBEST challenged candidates to disclose their agenda on environmental sustainability emphasizing that environmental concerns have only been cursory and novelty platforms for political candidates and existing regulations are softly enforced.

"The repercussions are real, and we are starting to feel them. The sooner we and the candidates realize that the environment 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," Bayarcal said.

Further, PBEST maintained that the 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.

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

"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 added.

PBEST noted that investors are also considering the sustainable growth of the economy before coming into the country.

"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 cost of doing business as a result of imbalanced supply and demand," Bayarcal said.